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A NEW GOSPEL

BY
PERSONA



NEW YORK
PRIVATELY PRINTED
1908

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A NEW GOSPEL

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PERSONA

L. C. Joseph Fassler

*"I will not leave you comfortless,
I will come to you."*

JOHN 14, 18.



NEW YORK
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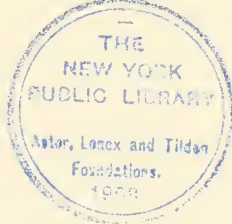
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By

A. FASSLER



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FOREWORD

THE Christ came to me one day that I was bowed down in sorrow over the sins and imperfections of our time.

For in my youth I had dreamed of an ideal country, a Christian land, and lo, what I found all around me during twenty years of search, had so little of His Spirit that it seemed to me as a pagan land, where He was unknown.

For, since my younger years, I tried to walk in His steps, as the shadow follows the substance, and, as I came nearer to Him, He came nearer to me, until He had His abode within my heart and was as one with me.

When He abided with me and we had become more as one soul, when He had imparted to me some of His Spirit, He revealed Himself more and more. I had sowed in me the seeds of His Spirit and I reaped in return a consciousness like His.

In time I became so as one with Him that I could almost see things as He would have seen them, and judge them with His judgment.

Then we set out together in the walks of men, saw things as they were, and, in the silence of my conscience I heard His Spirit pronounce its judgment on our age and their shortcomings.

I submitted to Him the burning questions of our time, our doubts and perplexities and, out in the world or in the silence of soul communions, He told me His opinions on them. He told me also of Himself, His mission and of the mistakes men had made about Him.

And, as His words were not for me alone, but interested all men, I could not keep them for myself, so I wrote them

Foreword

down for all the children of the Father. Whenever in these pages I mention Him going with me as a living person, it means that His Spirit accompanied me, and wherever we talked together, it is the dialogue of a man with his higher self, the ideal man created in him by the Spirit of Christ, seeing with His eyes, judging by Christ's standards.

Herein then is contained what His Spirit revealed to me during the twenty years we lived together in this part of the world; herein are contained His judgments, with all the imperfections of a man's soul, which was only an instrument of transmission, an imperfect mirror, trying to reflect the glory of the Light Eternal.

PART I
HIS SPIRIT ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS

A NEW GOSPEL

I

BEFORE setting out on our journey through this civilization of ours, His Spirit propounded to me the following question: "Friend, what thinkest thou, if I should come again to earth, would men know me for what I am?"

I answered, saying: "Thou knowest, Lord. Indeed, if Thou shouldst come in a cloud as some of Thy disciples expect Thee, all men would not fail to know Thee and hail Thee as their Lord."

"Thou knowest little whereof thou speakest," said He. "What would be the necessity for me to come to-day in such a miraculous way as in a cloud, when my mere appearance in some civilized country would be heralded from one end of the earth to the other? Thinkest thou not that this would be equivalent, in this day of cables and telegraphy, to be seen by all men?"

"They would be informed by the daily press of what I do, and my least sayings would be cabled to the extremities of the world. But this present day is not one of such miracles, and if I should come in the same manner as the first time, as a son of man, how thinkest thou men would receive me?"

"With open arms, Lord, I am sure."

"No, friend, men would know me no more than they did on my first coming. Some kind, simple, loving souls would recognize me, but by the great mass of the people, I would be considered as an impostor, even as insane."

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"But, O Christ," protested I, "couldst thou not easily prove thy identity by wonders and miracles?"

"If men do not know me by my character and the truths which I speak, they would not believe me even if I wrought miracles. They that are mine know me through their souls, not through their eyes or their intellect, and they that are not mine would not know me under whatever form I should appear.

"Believe me, friend, if I were to come again, I could not do it under a different form than of yore. I could not drop from the sky and would have to be born and reared as any one of you. I would be a man like thee, the only difference, perhaps, between my former and my new self would be the times, the environment, the circumstances and the culture; in spirit, I would be the same. But, who recognizes to-day the perfected spirit as a sign of divinity?

"No, friend, thy brother men, expecting a miracle worker coming as in a cloud, and not knowing the truth which is in me, would not recognize me, and I could pass in their midst as unknown as the least of them, if my spirit did not clash with the spirit of their time; and if it would clash, they would revile and persecute me, as did the men of my time."

And as I sat there, knowing in my heart of hearts that what He said was true and that He could not even get admission to membership in our churches, for the creeds He would have to subscribe to would be incomprehensible to Him, He added more forcibly:

"Friend, so many false notions have been spread about me that even they that are mine would not know me, for the Christ the scriptures have made, or the one men have made unto themselves is not like unto me. The true Christ should first be restored among men, then they shall know me when I come again, or when some one just like me shall appear.

"If I came in my true light men would preach against

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me in their stipended churches, and their press would revile and mock me, for have they not done the same to all prophets?

"As I would have to pursue some kind of a profession like any one of you, in order to make a living—for men like me could not grow among the rich of this world—they would say sneeringly, as of yore: 'Behold, is this not Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth?' or the mechanic, the artist, the professor, according to the trade I would have selected.

As I would rise against the wrongs and evils of the time in ecclesiastical as well as in secular matters, they would proclaim me full of conceit for criticising established convictions, just as the rabbis of my time rose in their wrath against me, accusing me of attacking their traditions.

"So, friend, thou seest that public recognition would not be my lot. But, now, as of yore, those that are of me would rejoice in these new words of mine, and those that are not of me would call me a blasphemer, as did the chief priests of Jerusalem.

"Let not this fact discourage thee, O my disciple, or prevent thee from recording what my spirit shall dictate to thee during the days of our going and coming together. Few have listened to me in my time, few may listen to thee, but truth is mighty and shall prevail."

Thus spoke the Master. Then, encouraged by His voice, I felt more at liberty to open to Him my heart and lay before Him our problems, religious, philosophical and social.

II

As I longed first to know what His Spirit had to say about the doubts and perplexities of our time, I laid these before him:

"O Master," said I, "this is an age of doubt; we are no more simple children of the faith who accept without ques-

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tions what our elders told us; we have reached the age of reason. We are longing for new words of life, for a new revelation. The God of our fathers, even Thy personal God, O Christ, has been weighed in the scale of our reason and He has been found wanting.

"The religions of old are dying around us. Thy children can no more believe in the things that are preached to them in Thy name, and, because they cannot accept them, they reject all religion."

He answered me, saying: "Friend, tell me of these doubts, and I will try to answer thee."

Then I laid before Him the conflict of faith with reason, the modern struggle between the old and the new conceptions of God and of religion.

"O Teacher, there is to-day a deadly antagonism between the God of old and our reason, and either one must come out a victor of the conflict: if it is the old God, his victory will proclaim the failure of human reason; if it is reason, the old God must perish.

"There has been in the last fifty years a wonderful change in all our conception of the universe and our place therein, first in science, then in religion. Our ideas, O Master, about the biblical God, maker of heaven and earth, who took matter in His hands and fashioned in six days this world and its living inhabitants have changed, for we have studied nature and her ways of operating.

"While we have studied nature, O Teacher, we have anxiously searched for the benevolent God that our fathers and Thyself have preached to us, and we have not found Him.

"We found to the contrary that, if this God is omnipotent He is not benevolent, for He has let, in nature and in history the worst crimes be committed, and has let mankind suffer the worse sufferings, besides being responsible for all the crimes and criminals of history, the Neros, the Attilas, the Borgias, the Torquemadas, responsible also for the thou-

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sands of human lives he led to destruction through natural upheavals, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and other catastrophes.

“When man, O Master, knew his exact place in this world, he saw that throughout the ages nature had been rather against him than for him, more of a shrew than a loving mother, he saw that the spirit which animated her had been indifferent rather than benevolent. All that man has gained, he has conquered by long centuries of effort and suffering; his experience was acquired in spite of all the natural forces in league against him. The sun would have burnt him had he not found shelter; the earth would have let him starve had he not procured food by preying on other creatures; water would have drowned him had he not learned how to swim, and the indifferent cold of the winter nights would have frozen him had he not found fuel. Besides, ferocious beasts would have devoured him and his specie, had not his intelligence taught him how to manufacture weapons.

“Arrived at the end of his inquiry, man, dumb with surprise, saw that all the universe had been in enmity against him, and he realized bitterly that his whole specie would have disappeared from the face of the earth, as did others which preceded his, without a tremor from one star in heaven, without a sympathetic feeling from anything on earth.

“Where was then the God, the benevolent Father whom His ancestors had worshiped? Man looked for Him, but his search was in vain; and then his conclusion was, O Master, that if there is an intelligent force in this universe it has no more feeling for him than the passing wind or gravitation and, therefore, what man is, he has become without the help of the God of his fathers.

“When man, O Master, had finished his search for a personal God in nature, he turned toward history. In history he found some of the most important events determined

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by the most trivial circumstances. The hollow roadway of Waterloo changed the face of Europe; whole tribes of men have disappeared without leaving any trace. No intelligent directions can be discovered in the march of historic events, they all can be explained through relation of cause and effect. If we can discover any sensible amelioration in the social conditions of the people, it has been conquered by countless sufferings, and this often in spite of those who represent God on earth, priests and churches.

"Then man turned the searchlight of his reason upon himself, O Master, and found that the same blind chance presides at his destiny. No intelligent choice directs the distribution of riches which are lavished upon unworthy men without any care for their moral worth. A monster may be born in a palace and a genius in a garret. Those that do good do not derive from it any material benefit, and those that do evil are not punished. In his life neither has man found a vestige of any superior intelligence or of a retributive justice. At last man, O Lord, pursuing his inquiry, came face to face with the problem of human suffering.

"He saw whole populations wiped out by unforeseen catastrophes, floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, he saw numberless accidents strike him in the course of his daily life; he saw children run over under their mother's eyes, couples separated by shipwrecks or railroad accidents, and whole cities with their populations destroyed by fire. And the thought that a friendly God directed all those things seemed to him such a great blasphemy that he had to renounce forever seeing the hand of God in human contingencies and the laws of his destiny.

"But when man, reaching the climax of his search, descended in the abyss of misery and disease, when he saw concentrated in a children's hospital, the infinite sum of pain and suffering weighing through the laws of heredity, on innocent heads, he recoiled in awe and anguish, and it seemed to him even greater blasphemy to attribute one iota

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of responsibility for such injustice to the Being he had learned to respect and to love. Then, wanting to find out even the source of his religion, man discovered at the end of his long inquiry that his ancestors found themselves so lonely in the universe, and reality so rude and cruel to them that, in order to find the courage to persevere in being, they had to create to themselves an ideal world wherein to take refuge in their dark hours against the hardships of reality. Thus, O Master, they found solace in the realm of music, poetry, art, philosophy and science, and thus they created religion.

"Thus man stands to-day, O Christ, between the horns of this dilemma: either he must abandon forever the idea of a God, omnipotent, responsible for evil, or accept a God benevolent but limited in his power. And ever since, O Lord, some of us, unable to choose, have remained orphans, preferring no God at all to the one who seems to us either cruel or powerless. We turn now to Thee in expectation. Speak Thou now the word, O Master, that shall solve our perplexities and clear our doubts.

"Abide with us in this hour; fast falls the even tide of doubt and then shall come the night of unbelief when we shall see Thee no more! Burst Thou open the doors of the theological grave wherein Thou sleepest since two thousand years! Throw away the shroud of time-worn creeds and appear to us again, as in Galilee, in Thy primal freshness and youth! Let Thy Spirit light anew our obscurity, for our way is dark and lonely, and our hearts are cast down within us!

"The old paths are worn out, O Master, and our souls yearn after new ones and new lights. Speak Thou again, we beseech Thee, a new gospel in the language of our times!"

III

THEN spake to me the Spirit of the Master, in the silence of my conscience, while I listened to Him reverently.

"The men of this generation demand a new light and a new sign: what shall I answer them?

"If this were an age of faith rather than an age of reason, the words I have once spoken would suffice for their guidance, but, if they insist, I shall speak to them the language of their time. The fact, O man, that thine have believed through countless centuries, in the existence of a God in which they can no more believe, does not prove that their conceptions of him were, even once, right, for man's theological notions may have been as erroneous as his scientific ideas, and the true God is not responsible for man's misunderstandings.

"Thou hast spoken of man's struggle against the forces of nature in league against him. Hast thou ever thought that probably, being given nature's mode of evolution, man could not have been made what he is in any other way?

"Without necessity would there have been inventions? Without resistance would there have been creative energy? Without obstacles and difficulties to surmount would there have been the intelligence to surmount them?

"Thou hast said that man had to find refuge against the cruelty of reality in the creation of an ideal world—which after all he may only have discovered, as he discovered mathematics—let me ask thee then, O friend, if this ideal world would ever have been created had reality been less severe, less cruel? Would there have been an ideal world at all had the rigors of necessity not forced man's moral nature to take refuge in it?

"Why then blame the rough schoolmaster of nature for a process of education which has made humanity what it is,

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and without which it might still be in the oyster or jelly-fish stage! This process has been cruel and blind in its operation, even unjust, as it seems to the species and individuals it destroyed in its course, but nature's ways are not man's ways, and the survivors might even find in this severe process of selection, some crude forms of love—a love which is not like man's love.

“Yes, friend, from this rude process of evolution man was to reap his grandest benefit, for during this struggle against material necessities and the enmity of nature, God was in the making in man. The germ of the Spirit which was in him, spurned by necessity, grew and made him what he is, sharpened his intelligence and keened his wits. That he may have attributed to outside help what in reality was only the work of his intelligence does not lessen the importance of his evolution. So, alongside of man's material growth, has taken place another, the evolution of the moral world.

“Put in presence of an antagonistic force, man had to oppose to it another, and this force he drew from inside. To the exterior pressure he offered a corresponding interior pressure, and ever since he has been a victor in the measure that his inside pressure resisted successfully the one from outside.

“But primitive man never realized this; he attributed his victory over the elements to the protective idols or gods he had manufactured himself, while in reality he owed everything to this force whose seat *was in himself*. It is all the more true, O friend, that in creating his gods, man has done nothing else but to project himself in them, for, as his intelligence and spirit grew, so his gods grew likewise. The clay or wood fetishes of his household became the titular gods of his tribe, and one of these tribes having established its supremacy, by force of arms, over the others, their tribal god became the god of the nation, as happened with the Yaweh of the Jews. Finally, O my disciple, thou knowest

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how the Jehovah of Israel has become the god of all humanity and has remained so for two thousand years.

"But at no time in history has this god been recognized as final, for he never ceased growing in the hearts of men. Why, then, O friend, should He be forever set, established and sealed in a book? Has man's spirit stopped growing that the old God should stop growing also?

"Thus, O friend, thou canst see how, out of primitive chaos man alone, of all animals, has evolved the idea of a God of righteousness, of holiness, of love. This God has been in formation since man was first capable of thinking: dost thou think He is now perfect among you? Why then lament and fear for the future of religion, when some of the old conceptions are destroyed and replaced by others, more conforming to truth and consequently better?

"Why should not this generation revise its notions of God, as a thousand others have revised theirs?

"Let us now admit as valid the claim of reason that one cannot find empirically any trace of a benevolent God, either in nature or in history, let us take for granted that the evidence of a personal transcendent God cannot be proven experimentally: there still remains the interior God, the God of conscience as a last refuge of the divinity. It is this interior God who has revealed himself in man and by man, whom you should worship now, if you find the exterior God of nature indifferent to your fate. For verily this God exists only in man and through man and, if there were no sentient creatures like him in this universe, God would not exist, for no sentient being would reflect Him. What would it be to Him to have an existence *per se* if none was there to share the consciousness of it?

"Man is consequently the material of which God is made; it becomes his duty to increase the sum of God now existing in the universe, and the great among you are those that increase the sum of the Spirit. Men have believed in the exterior God, they have imprisoned Him in a book and

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have persecuted each other in His name, but the interior God is infinite and no other limits are set to His greatness than the vastness of man's conceptions. The exterior God creates rituals and mercenary worshippers, the God of conscience creates only worshippers in Spirit and in truth. The exterior God cannot be found anywhere, the other is eternally present on the altar of conscience.

"This God, O friend, does not exact a showy cult or a magnificent ritual, but demands only the love of all that is holy, righteous, pure and beautiful.

"He does not distribute material favors to those who offer Him exterior sacrifice, but grants to His true worshippers inner rewards so sweet and so glorious, and to the soul a peace so ineffable that material satisfactions cannot compare with it. How then canst thou say that the just is not rewarded? Verily, the poor in his cottage, if he has this peace of soul, is more fortunate than the unjust rich in his palace! It is possible, O my disciple, that the exterior God your fathers imagined, being busy with the running of this material universe, forgets sometimes to punish the guilty, but the inner God is inexorable and does not let *one* transgression of his laws pass unpunished before the tribunal of conscience.

"And it is better, O friend, to fall in the hands of human justice than before the court of such a judge. For he rewards constantly every good action and punishes instantly each iniquity. Why sayest thou then that good goes unrewarded and evil unpunished? There may be discord sometimes in the moral world, but there is no anarchy. The material sun may shine alike upon the just and the unjust, but the inner sun does *never* shine upon the unjust. What better God therefore desirest thou, and what better justice demandest thou?

"But, O friend, a God that is only just is not an ideal God, for he lacks love. He does not satisfy man's inner yearning for the peace of his soul, through pardon and

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reconciliation. The further evolution of the idea of God demanded a greater attribute, the one of love, and this love I have revealed you, so that your souls should be freed of the burden of your sins by the consciousness of forgiveness, through repentance."

IV

"BUT, Master," retorted I, "art thou not afraid to proclaim human conscience as our sole guide in the knowledge of truth?" Where was conscience in the beginning of man's moral growth, when he was roaming in the trees of the primeval forests, and where was his God then? Moreover, what authority can have, as a guide, the conscience of the uneducated and the depraved.

"Friend," replied the Spirit, "when I speak of conscience I do not mean the individual conscience, which may be uneducated or depraved, as thou sayest, but the greater conscience, the sum total of man's experience in the field wherein the individual seeks guidance.

"As to man's moral beginnings, his God was just as much in infancy then as any other branch of his mental equipment. This being so, who was then the leader, the authority for a step forward in his education? Was it not the most enlightened conscience, the most refined? And, what was the instrument whereby the more educated conscience was recognized as superior by those who accepted its leadership? Was it not man's inner sense of what is right, his intuition of what is just and good?"

"It certainly was, O Master," said I.

"Well, friend, as it was then, so it is to-day. A more enlightened conscience than yours, more sensitive to truth, more intuitive, will be your leader and authority, if you want it or not.

"To refuse to obey its dictates is to commit the unpardon-

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able sin, which is to know the highest truth, the highest good, and not to conform to them.

"Thou hast also spoken, O friend," went on the Spirit, "of the irregularities of birth and of fortune: does the inner God distribute wealth which is to Him useless, for it cannot procure peace to the soul? Dost thou believe that He blesses your Wall Street speculations or sanctions your business tricks?"

"Or, is this God responsible for your social irregularities, created by you and abated by you? Is He responsible for your sins, your vices or your gathering in great foul cities, all which things are responsible for disease? Is He responsible for your ignorance of and violation of the laws of health and hygiene, which causes the diseases you transmit to your children?"

"Besides, who has taught you to make God the author of evil, for how can two opposite and antagonistic forces proceed from the same will?"

"If you make your God the author of evil you make Him responsible for all the wrongs of the past, the present and the future. You make Him the author of all diseases, accidents, vices, crimes, desolations, tears and tortures. By what right would you make of my Father a tortioner?"

"Why not escape from your self-made dilemma: God will and cannot, or God can and will not, by deciding frankly that God will, but cannot?"

"For is not a God benevolent but limited, preferable to a God omnipotent, but not benevolent? Of what necessity is to your conscience an omnipotent God?"

"Have you not found, all through the history of your moral evolution, the forces of good and evil in mortal struggle, and are they not struggling now? Does this not prove to you that God is limited and that the Spirit finds itself in the presence of evil, a condition which God has not created and which he fights through you?"

"Does this present imperfect moral condition of the world

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not show clearly that the victory is not yet won, and that this victory is only gradual? Does it not show that the victory of God is only partly obtained and that, even God, is in the making within you?

“Verily, I say unto you, the God of the future has not yet been manifested, for He is still in formation. God is within you and it depends on you that His kingdom shall come on earth: bring therefore your individual stone to the making of the God which is the work of all ages. Perfect yourselves that your God be perfect.”

V

THEN I asked Him: “Master, Thou hast well spoken, but Thou hast not answered me upon all points. Why hast Thou revealed to us God as the Father when He has nothing to do with our material welfare?”

And he answered me, saying:

“You cannot find the Fatherhood of God by studying nature, this is a contribution from man’s conscience. Each of the prophets and teachers has contributed his mite to the making of the God the ages have evolved, each one has *created* his conception. In them each of the attributes of God has found its birth, and in me and by me the eternal Spirit reached the idea of its fatherhood to man. I did not find this idea in nature, but in myself, it is my contribution to the work of milleniums, the making of the God which is in being since the first sparkle of the Spirit moved on the face of the waters, since the first sentient being started his march to the Spirit.

“The Fatherhood idea has taken birth with me, but it is left to you to bring about its realization by loving one another as should the children of a common father. As far as the idea of a God interfering in your material welfare is concerned, have ye not found out, through the operation

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of modern reason, that He has nothing to do with the events of your evolution and history, but that the Spirit has achieved all of it through its growth within you?

"Why then look you for an external or *direct* intervention which your reason cannot discover, which has never taken place, and why worry at all about such an intervention when I have told you: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and all things shall be added unto you'?"

Then I told Him: "Teacher, dost Thou not contradict Thyself? For Thou hast said: 'The very hairs of your head are numbered,' and 'do they not sell two sparrows for a farthing and verily I say unto you, not one of them falls on the ground without the permission of your Father which is in Heaven?'"

Then he retorted:

"How long shall ye be slaves of texts and authoritative statements? Verily, if I used Oriental images to show you how much the Father, in my estimation, took care of His children, I spake with the ideas and the learning of my age. But now that you have grown, have you found such a Father with such a care in nature? If you can prove such a Father exists, believe ye on Him, but if you cannot, don't believe in Him because of words I may have once spoken. For, verily, I say unto you again, there is no infallible man, no infallible book, no infallible church. Do not place unreasoning faith in old texts, but in the living truth only.

"When men were children in mind, the Spirit spake to them as unto children, with authority; but to-day, some of you have outgrown childhood and can tell to the Spirit: let us reason together.

"But, verily, the greater number of you are still children and this new wine is too strong for them. Let such keep the old texts and drink the old wine in the old vessels. For this new wine I give unto you to-day would burst any vessel not strong enough to contain it."

VI

ONE day I happened to enter the store of a publisher of theological and religious works. Shelves upon shelves of books I beheld, great big volumes bound in all colors and looking learned, grave, venerable. The Spirit of the Master seemed greatly impressed within me at the sight of so much printing, and I felt proud of the place He occupied in our religious literature. "What are all these about?" queried the Spirit. "These, O Lord, are books written to enlighten men on Thy subject, commencing with the Bible at the garden of Eden and unfolding God's plan of salvation, until Thy coming."

And selecting some books at random, I opened them: "Behold! here is a learned treatise on Thy *Prenatal State*; here is a wise discourse on Thy *Immaculate Conception*; this one is on Thy *Incarnation*; and this other a very erudite pamphlet on the *Mystery of the Holy Trinity*." Then, turning to another shelf: "Here, O Lord, is a book on the doctrine of *Sacrifice and Atonement*; another on the *Christian doctrine of Sin*; a third one on Thy *Atonement and Intercession*; a fourth on Thy *Vicarious Sacrifice*, and so forth *ad infinitum*."

"On this shelf, O Lord, lie ponderous volumes of *dogmatics* to expound church doctrines and dogmas, and countless works of *apologetics* to defend them. Behold, there are no less than three recent ones, while hundreds have been written since the beginning of Thy era, in all countries and all languages."

"Hundreds of learned men paled under the lamp to write these books, which are made over again every thirty years under a new form. The world could not contain all that has been written about Thee."

"And all this, sayest thou, has been put forth to explain,

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and comment on, a personality as simple as mine? Men have indeed an amazing imagination," said the Spirit.

"Yes, Master, nothing short of marvelous. Besides that, each one of those books is fortified with commentaries, copious footnotes and reference galore, all showing to the bewildered laymen that Thy doctrine, O Master, is not as simple as Thou thinkest. Moreover, when the Spirit of the times assails one of these doctrines, there arise a bevy of new defenders of the faith, who, with the ardor of a Scotch divine, try to sit on the lid and inflict on a long suffering Christianity new inquartos and voluble commentaries, giving a modern twist to the venerable dogma."

"But how did men come to pervert my simple teaching into such a complicated system of theology?" asked the Spirit.

"Here is Harnack's *History of the Dogma*. This German historian will show Thee by what process this has been accomplished. Thou wilt see herein that every age has contributed to the beclouding of thine original words, which process is called the natural evolution of the dogma."

"But tell me, friend," said He, "what are all these strange lucubrations founded upon? Have they a basis of fact or reason?"

"Not necessarily, O Lord. They are grounded on some alleged words of thine, remembered wrongly or rightly by Thy disciples, years after Thy death. The said disciples, in their turn, have left some writings, and it is on these premises, on the free conclusion that these writings are divinely inspired, that the whole theological fabric rests. This is called scriptural evidence, but would not hold in modern rules of evidence."

And as I remained a moment silent in deep meditation over the strange fabrications of men, His Spirit spake again.

"Friend," said He, "Has there been no protest against these dogmas and creeds? Has never a voice been raised against this unnatural complication of my teaching?"

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"Most certainly, dear Master! Through all centuries men have arisen who have protested against the official orthodoxy of their time, but the Church had then an easy way of squaring things: she simply condemned the dissenters as heretics and burned them at the stake in Thy name." And His Spirit protested in horror at the remembrance of all the sins committed in His name. "Are men still doing such things nowadays?" queried He.

"No, Master! Thanks to progress, not to Thy Church, we have a little more freedom of conscience. The ecclesiastical authorities can no more burn heretics, they can only expel them from the ministry when they are intelligent clerics, or refuse to accept them in the churches when they are intelligent laymen, who cannot put on the heavy armor of the creeds. Still, to be candid, there is a certain uneasiness in church circles, the armor plate shows signs of getting loosened in some places, and efforts are being made to revise the creeds. Even Presbyterianism is sometimes trying to shed its shell; the process is a painful one and never succeeded, for the Presbyterian crab is a crusty old one and its shell has many dogmatic pieces.

"Thy Spirit, O Lord, is in other religious bodies, held down so firmly by the armor plate of creeds that human conscience chokes and dares not breathe under it. One of those bodies, the largest, is so tightly corseted with the steel of dogmas that the little of Thy Spirit left under the armor will never come to liberty again.

"Why! no later than 1870, O Christ, that church has screwed down the last plate by proclaiming its leader infallible!" "What!" exclaimed the Spirit in surprise. "How did they come to do that?" "Well, in this way: a few fallible men get together, elect one of their number and presto! the selected one becomes infallible."

"But," protested the Lord, "how can several naughts added together make a unity?"

"I don't know, O Master, neither do the good cardinals,

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but Thou oughtest to know, for Thou art supposed to perform the miracle."

After we left the publisher's store, the Spirit remained a while silent, deeply meditating upon the significance of all this sacred literature.

"Tell me, O disciple," said he at last—as we resumed our journey like Dante and Virgil—"is there any hope that some day and somewhere, somebody will rise and proclaim my gospel in its purity, without adulterations and increments of the ages, and without theology?"

"So many men have proclaimed my divinity, will some one at last proclaim my humanity?"

"Thou knowest, O Lord," answered I, "Thy true Spirit certainly liveth among some men and has always so lived, in its pristine simplicity. Those, the humble, the true and the pure in heart will restore Thee to Thy place. They that long for sincerity, truth, holiness and love, as Thou hast longed, shall re-establish Thee among men as they see Thee in their hearts.

"But, O Master, be not hard on the theologians, for they do not mean ill. Their minds are so befuddled with apostolic and patristic conceptions of Thee, that they simply cannot see Thee as Thou art, no more than thine own disciples saw Thee in Thy true light, and, if even those who were with Thee did not understand Thee, how can our poor scholars of to-day, who are led astray by all the weird constructions the ages have built upon Thy simply personality, Thy life and Thy mission?"

"But, O dear Master, this age is fast coming back to a natural, more rational and less imaginative view of things. Thy restoration is commenced in the minds and hearts of men, and soon Thy true disciples shall reverence Thy true image in spirit and in truth."

VII

ONE bright Easter day the Spirit and I went around the town and we saw people all dressed to go to church.

We followed them inside one of the greatest. The altar was all bedecked with roses, azaleas, palms and lilies. The spirit of Easter, a spirit of joy and renewal, was in the air, mingled with the first touches of spring.

We sat down in a pew and heard anew, with some beautiful singing, the old, old story of the first Eastern morn, when the disciples came to the Lord's Sepulchre and found it empty.

"Lord," said I when we went out again after the service, "Thou hast witnessed how faithfully Thy churches have kept the remembrance of Thy resurrection, and how reverently they celebrate its anniversary.

"But, O Master, a doubt has always existed amongst men concerning Thy resurrection: Some deny it flatly and brand as a tissue of falsities, the Gospel's narrative of it, others treat the story of Thy apparitions as hallucinations of Thy disciples, others yet, theosophically inclined, say that what Thy friends saw on that day was not Thy body of flesh, but Thy astral or spiritual body. O Master, enlighten us and remove our doubt, I beseech Thee, for we are weary of suspense and the scoffers ask us constantly: 'Where's Thy God's resurrection?' "

The Master answered me, saying:

"Why do men attribute so much importance to my resurrection?"

"We consider it important, O Lord, because Paul, Thy apostle, has said: 'If Christ is not risen, therefore your faith is vain.' We take it also as a guaranty of our own survival." And He answered me:

"Men believe in my resurrection, but in what way would mine guarantee theirs?"

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"If I arose from the dead it was because death hath no power over Him that is all spirit, for spirit is of its essence immortal. Verily, if you live like me you shall likewise rise, but if you do not become like me, you shall not live the life of the Spirit, as the spirit only can enter eternal life. If you do not become spiritualized you cannot enter it."

"O Lord," said I, "Thou hast not answered me concerning Thy own resurrection."

"Friend, what is the important point in my arising from the dead? Is it the everlasting life of the few molecules of my earthly body, or is it the survival of my spirit?"

"Lord," said I, "it is the everlasting life of Thy spirit."

"Behold, then, O my disciple, is not my spirit living to-day among you, and is it not covering the world? Of what use would be the resurrection of this body of mine that once incarnated it? Am I not greater since I have arisen, having now no limit of time or space, than when I was in the flesh? Verily, if you live like me, you shall be with me and wherever I am there shall you be also. What other fate than his Master's could the disciple envy? Be you then at rest in your mind, for, if the Master has had no resurrection why should the disciple demand one? And if He arose from the dead then shall His true disciples arise also, provided they live like Him and become one with Him."

And I told Him: "O Master, let it be done to me according to Thy will. For I shall be contented to be wherever Thou art, in life eternal or in death, provided I am with Thee. But I know that Thou liveth, for Thou art living in me to-day."

Then the Master added:

"Let yourselves not be worried saying: There being no spirit without some physical vehicle to carry it, with which vehicle shall our spirit enter eternal life? Verily I say unto you: Nature's resources are infinite and she has already provided for such an emergency. If your survival be neces-

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sary to the preservation of moral energy, it will take place; as to what concerns the survival of your loves, selfish ambitions and small wishes, how many of them deserve to be preserved, and how many men deserve eternal life? But the contents of your personalities shall pass through the Crucible of Death, whose fire will destroy all that is not the finest gold of the Spirit.

“Of one great fact only need you rest assured, it is that you will reap whatever you sow. If you sow of the flesh, you will reap of the flesh corruption, but if you sow of the spirit you will reap of the spirit life eternal. Verily, this is one of the greatest truths that ever was spoken.

“Now, I will say one more word to the doubters and speak to them the language of their time: If there is a future life or if there is none, you must live this life. There is one chance out of two that the immortality of the soul is a true fact: Why not take this one chance and live as if there was another existence, if by so doing you lead a better and nobler life?

“Immortality may be only in the making among you, as was flight, hearing and eyesight at one stage of animal evolution. The faith in its possibility would then become a necessity, so that your descendants may one day get the benefit of its realization. For the human eye would never have been evolved and perfected if your far away ancestors had said: ‘There is no such thing as eyesight, let us stop striving to attain it.’

“Faith in the possibility of these things has created them, why should not the faith in man’s eternal life, and his striving after it, bring about its realization? Verily, for some of the past and some among you, it has been realized.

“This generation needs a firmer belief in the potentiality and creative power of faith. But even were it true, as some of you believe, that personality is lost at death, learn then how to resign yourselves. You have *renounced self*, to follow me—who am only a part of the spirit—and thereby

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you have found peace for your souls, why should you fear the greater renouncing of death, which shall merge your small self in the all-embracing one of the Father? Then shall ye all indeed be *one* with Him as I am *one*."

Thus spoke the Spirit of the Master on that bright Easter morn.

VIII

HIS Spirit came to me one day that Death had entered my home and I was mourning the loss of my only child. It was night and I was keeping the wake alone. Her little white form lay among the white flowers, smiling in the serene majesty of death, and I, the joy of my life gone forever, was bowed down and broken-hearted by grief. I wept as I never wept before, during those dreadful hours of the night.

But as I was thus sobbing over my lost child soul, He came to me in the silence of the death chamber. His presence was like that of a shadow; I did not see Him, but I knew He was there.

Silently, I pointed to Him the calm figure among the white lilies and He looked—I knew He looked—and I knew also He was weeping with me.

And when I felt His great sympathy flowing over me, I sobbed louder and could only murmur in my despair:

"Why? O Master, why?"

Then His voice came to me softly, a balm to my aching heart:

"Brother, thou askest me why? Believest thou I or my Father is the cause of thy grief? How is this possible? My Father is Life, I am Life, and Death is our common enemy: why should we work for Death?"

"Thy beloved child was born with a right to live, but, as soon as she was born, the forces of Death battled against her and they have won.

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"O brother, who mourns more than we the triumphs of Death?"

"What are we, then, O Master, even Thou and I," said I bitterly, "that Death can conquer us? We are like a flower that is in the morning and at night is cut down. Our days are numbered, yea, before our birth, our days are numbered."

"Yea, brother, thou hast spoken right, the days of man are numbered before his birth, not by the Father, but by man's power of resistance against the forces of Death, disease and sin. Those that have great powers of resistance live long, those that have not, die young. Why then accuse the Father when one of those little ones falls under the touch of Death with which the Father himself is struggling constantly in the whole universe? Verily, I say unto thee, no mortal is ever recalled by Him except he die of old age, which is the natural death. For sin and disease who reap the harvest of human lives are death's instruments."

And as I stood there, refusing to be comforted and lost in my despair, He spoke again, more gently, more sweetly:

"Brother, dost thou not feel in thy heart the Father's heart mourning with thee, grieving with thee, weeping with thee because of the injustice life has done to thy child? Is not His Spirit constantly in sympathy with all them that mourn in His worlds, all them that fought His fight against Death and have been vanquished?"

"Verily, I tell thee, He gathers all those little ones, departed before their time, more precious unto His bosom than a mother gathers her children for the night's sleep; and the garden of the Spirit is full of just such tender flowers."

But I, still refusing to be comforted, cried out unto Him, in anguish:

"O Master, my child is dead for me, is she living in Thee, and shall I see her again?"

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Then He, in His great patience and gentleness, rebuked me not:

"Brother," said He, "dost remember how I recalled to life Jairus' daughter, and gave her back to her parents?"

I could only sob and murmur, "Yes, Master, I remember."

"How could I have recalled her if she had not been living? For was she in that dead body of hers? If I could then recall to its earthly envelope the spirit of Jairus' daughter, how much more can I gather unto my spirit the spirit of this little one, thy daughter!"

"Master," answered I, "I know that her spirit is now with the Universal Spirit, but, pray, clear another doubt: To-morrow a man who sits in Thy pulpit, will come here and tell me in Thy name that this child has been taken away by the Father's will, and that I should bow down resignedly before it. Tell, me, O Lord, that this is not true, for if it were so, I could never again lift up my hands to Him in prayer."

"Brother," whispered the Spirit, "is my God a murderer of little children or a tortioner of parents? If he had allowed them to come in this world, full of the rich promises of life and smiling sweetly to it, would it not almost prove human inconsistency to recall them suddenly?"

"But, verily, I say unto thee: Men, and not my Father, bring their children in this world, and ignorance, disease and death take them out of it, not He. Thousands of children die yearly through ignorance, filth, misery and disease, is it then my Father that killed them? Verily, my God is no murderer of children or of men.

"Remove, therefore, my God as a cause of your goings and comings, for He has nothing to do with them, but accuse instead natural causes, which are sufficient to explain them all."

Thus I listened to Him in the deep silence of the death chamber, during the dreary hours of the wake, while the great town around me was asleep.

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Thus He answered my perplexities and cleared my doubts, thus He consoled me.

And because of His words, I did not accuse the Great God of having robbed me of my child, for, through the Spirit of Christ, He had grieved, mourned and wept with me.

IX

ONE Sunday, during the time I went with the Master's Spirit to study the churches, we heard an old-fashioned sermon on the value, inerrancy and importance of the Scriptures.

Then the Spirit of the Master entered into me and spoke against the bibliolatry, which perverted the minds of religious people.

"The Romanists," said He, "have made unto themselves a pope of flesh, and they have proclaimed him infallible, but you have made unto yourselves a pope of paper and you worship him as inerrant. What is this fetish of a book that you have set on your altars?"

"Is this age so devoid of originality that it cannot build its own conceptions without clinging servilely to the ancients?"

"How can your ideas grow with the time if you accept as set and definite the ideas of bygone men?"

"Is it because you think them more inspired than those of to-day?"

"Has then God revealed Himself more in the past than now? Verily, I tell you, He has revealed Himself more in the last hundred years than in all the previous centuries.

"And how did He reveal Himself to those whose revelations you accept? Where was Moses' Bible or the Prophets', and how did they receive their revelations? Think you perhaps that the Lord stood by them and dictated while they wrote?"

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“No, but His revelations came by the inflowing of His Spirit into man’s soul. What He has done for the men of the past He is ready to do for you. Go you then forward seeking the truth in your own way, forming thereby a personal conception of God, which shall be *yours*, and not Moses’, Isaiah’s, or Paul’s.

“Do not think yourselves compelled to accept forever servilely other men’s ideas, but listen to the still, small voice of the Spirit and follow its dictates. But compare them to the dictates others have received, and do not believe your own voice to be inerrant, for there is no infallible criterion.

“Why should you abdicate your sacred right of free examination before a set of books, however much of the Spirit they may contain?

“Is it because they are called the word of God?

“Verily, I say unto you, every word of truth *is* the word of God. Is truth contained only in one book, and had the old Hebrews an everlasting monopoly of it?

“And who commanded you to have such a faith in the Bible? What authority, other than superstitious reverence, have you to warrant your faith?

“Where does this book itself claim the authority and inerrancy wherewith you have clothed it?

“Is it not a product of the human mind like any other Scripture, and consequently fallible?

“Or do you, as the Chinese do with their Scriptures, reverence them because they are old?

“Even in this you would err, for the Spirit has been revealed to man before the first book of the Bible was conceived in the mind of its first scribe, and it has continued its revelation since you have closed its canon.

“The Spirit has spoken to man since there dawned in him the first consciousness that he had a spirit, since the days when its teachings were recorded in the books of the Hindoos, the Chinese, the Persians and the Egyptians, since the days of Buddha and Confucius, of Socrates and Plato,

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since the days of Manu, Epictetes and Marcus Aurelius, up to Thomas à Kempis, Spinoza, Pascal and Kant. But you have not recognized it as such.

“Why have you used, and why are you using, only one small part of the rich inheritance of the ages, and why have you made of Hebraic literature alone the word of God? Could this word be found nowhere else?”

“Or think you these books alone are inspired?”

“Believe me, there is only one inspiration, the inspiration of truth. All that is true and useful in the Bible comes from the Spirit. Verily, neither Moses nor Isaiah have been inspired differently than the author of the *Imitation*. Widen ye then the scope of your mind and make yourselves, out of all the wisdom of the ages and the revelations of the Spirit among all peoples, a book that shall be really the Bible of humanity.

“Do not misunderstand me, O my disciple, I do not try to impeach thy respect for the Bible which contains a record of the evolution of the idea of God in a religiously gifted people, but I warn thee against the exaggerated importance and authority with which it has been vested. For, as men have made it, the Bible to-day stands in the path of a further evolution of my Spirit. While it is only a halting place, it is considered by many to be a terminal, and a final revelation.

“But man has outgrown it in many respects, for the Spirit of man is infinite in its scope, and greater than any Bible that pretends to limit it. Verily, the Bible was made for man, not man for the Bible.”

X

SOMETIMES, when I was in communion with His Spirit, I asked Him all I longed to know about Himself since the days of my youth.

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He told me about Himself one evening I was thinking of His wonderful life.

"Master," did I ask Him, "wilt Thou let me understand the story of Thy life and of Thy mission, as Thou didst conceive it, for lo, men have enriched it and altered it with myths, legends and wonderful stories, giving strange interpretations to Thy mission and even to Thy death.

"Wilt Thou now give me the power to separate what is true from what is false, what is really from Thee from what comes from men?"

And the Spirit said: "Friend, tell me what men have written about me?"

And I laid before Him all the strange stories of the Gospels.

"Lord," said I, "Thou wert long dead before men conceived the idea of writing down all they knew about Thee, and traditions, myths and legends had already been interwoven with the true record of Thy acts and sayings.

"People had in those days vague notions about historical precision and accuracy; they were used to clothe their great men with marvelous and supernatural powers, and were prompt to weave legends around them. Those that carried Thy Gospel to the surrounding countries had to deal with people whom the supernatural and marvelous alone could strike, who were used to regard as sons of God all men a little out of the ordinary, so, when Thy disciples presented Thee to take the place of pagan gods, they could not make of Thee less than the gods they wanted Thee to supersede and they made of Thee the only true begotten Son of God. As all those pagan gods had performed wonderful miracles and done great things, the events of Thy life were unconsciously magnified and altered to suit the spirit of the age, for the limits of the true and the untrue were also very vaguely known. Some of the most marvelous events recorded in the *Apocrypha* have been discarded by the most enlightened, but enough was left to strike the pagan imagination

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and to make of Thee, in the domain of the miraculous, no less a personage than any pagan god.

"As to Thy doctrine and teaching, O Lord, Thy disciples were soon brought in contact, in the centers of Greek learning, with Greek philosophy, and much of the latter's conceptions were embodied with the Hebraic, Apostolic and Pauline teachings. The Greek fathers completed this welding together of the two thoughts, and it remained for medieval scholastics to complicate still more this strange mixture. Finally, our modern times have given the finishing touch to the strangest theological monument the ages have ever reared, a monument of which science was able only a few years ago to discern the artificial foundations. The result of this theology and philosophy has been to make of Thee a personality, so complicated, so unreal, and so strange, that the people of the present time, trained in experimental thinking, and having a better knowledge of what is naturally possible or impossible, refuse to accept it as true.

"And the worst is, O Lord, that, as the preservers of the Christian faith have refused to separate the dross from the pure gold and the impossible and false from what is true, the new generations are driven away from Thee, the authority of Thy life and teaching is thereby impaired and nullified, and Thy Gospel has no more saving power for the men of this generation.

"What shall we do, O Master, and what shall we believe? Modern exegesis has sifted down the material left by the Gospel writers, and so little is left that is not disputed by critics, that it is impossible for the average man to distinguish what is really Thine from the traditions, the imaginings of the original writers and the subsequent interpolations?"

* * * * *

"Friend," said the Spirit, as I pondered over this grave problem, "let us take the Gospels and read them carefully

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in the light of thy time. Let us discard what modern reason refuses to accept, and we will see what manner of Christ will come out of this study."

"Master," said I, "we will have to leave off Thy virgin birth, Thy miracles, all the supernatural of the Gospels, all the doctrines which have been built upon alleged words of Thine, for this generation refuses to accept them."

"What are my miracles to my personality?" answered He.

"Men can blot them all out, and still I shall remain, morally the same Christ, for they are not necessary to the conception of my spiritual nature.

"Discard all the legendary side of my life, which is now impossible of belief, drop the material side, all my alleged miracles, to retain only my spiritual nature, my teaching and my moral work, and thou shalt still have left as a residue a personality no son of man has ever equaled."

I did then as His Spirit recommended, and this is the Christ I found in the Gospels, viewed in the light of modern reason.

* * * * *

Born a Jew, the son of a carpenter, Jesus was brought up in the culture of the Jews of His time, and we find in His teachings traces of the influences of the Hebraic scriptures, even of ebionitic teaching, his mental and spiritual parentage.

He fed on this literature, and these scriptures inspired Him until the Spirit led Him into greater truths, through natural evolution. His mother was a woman not different from any other in Nazareth and, after the Oriental status of her sex in His time, Jesus did not seem to consider her any more than any son of Israel considered his own mother. We find proof of this in different parts of the Gospels, notably where He said: "Who is my mother? and who are my brothers? Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

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He lived among the simple folks of Galilee, by the hills of Nazareth, and worked with His father at a carpenter's bench.

There the Spirit of God entered into Him because His heart was pure and trusting, and because He loved the truth and the life of the Spirit.

He lived and observed men, and as He observed them, He saw that they did not live according to the dictates of His Spirit, which He felt to be one with the eternal spirit of truth.

For His communion with the ideal had made Him different from other men, but still He went with them, for He loved them.

He saw them in His time, as they do to-day, worship lifeless texts, bygone ordinances, and feed on the dry husks of the law.

He took great pity on them, for they knew not the Truth as it had revealed itself to His conscience.

When He could keep no longer in check the message of God that was throbbing within Him, He came out in the world and rose against the false teaching of His time, its formalism and respect for the dead letter of the law, and those that embodied these things and kept them, hated Him, for His heart was burning with the living fire of the Spirit, and the truth which He felt within commanded Him imperatively to go forth and restore things as they should be.

While He was among men He went from place to place doing good, healing those that had faith in Him, preaching the forgiveness of sin, and the higher life of the soul. He loved dearly the common people, was a friend to the publican, and did not cast away the sinner that came to Him.

Humble men were His disciples, humble women loved Him, but the great of the land knew Him not.

The Master soon realized that the clash of the new spirit He carried, with the spirit of His time, would cause men to destroy Him, but He gladly laid down His life that His

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Spirit should live among men, to elevate them morally and make them happy as it had made Him happy.

Then came the hour of darkness, the hour of those that could not bear the truth and lived from the preaching of old texts. We know how they conspired against Him, bought Him from Judas and seized Him, how they imprisoned, reviled and, finally, crucified Him.

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Thus, by this simple process of reconstructing His life along the same lines as any human life, and by discarding all miraculous and mythical stories of the Gospel narratives, we had reconstituted His life as it truly must have been. And Jesus did not come out belittled by this process. The great moral life and spiritual personality, disclosed in the Gospels, would have been simple enough for a wonderful and supernatural being, as the disciples conceived Him to be, but it was truly remarkable, lived by a son of man like us. And if it was small merit for a Son of God to live a perfect life, there was a greater power of inspiration for men to know that *a man like us* had once lived such a life.

Were it even demonstrated that no such a being as Jesus ever existed, it were a priceless boon for humanity that His existence had once been postulated. For men, having faith in the possibility of becoming as perfect a man as Christ was, has lived to imitate His ideal, and the little progress he has made in moral perfection is due to his belief that once had lived a Perfect Man, and that every man could become like Him.

This belief in the possibility of becoming an Ideal Man once destroyed, the moral stature of humanity will decrease, and man will never again have the strength to rise out of his congenital imperfection.

XI

"LORD," objected I, to the Spirit after I had reached these conclusions, "those who have been fed on the old theology will find Thy life very simple and deprived of any cosmic grandeur. They had built upon some of Thy alleged words a great plan of salvation whereby Thou hadst died as a vicarious sacrifice for us sinners, in order to placate an angry God whom we had offended by our sins. Thy blood was to render us innocents in the eyes of the divinity by some magical power, and Thy merits were to be attributed to us, so that the angry God men had imagined, did not see us as we were, but covered by Thy merits and saved by the punishment Thou hadst suffered in our place."

"The minds of my disciples," answered the Spirit, "were too much filled with Hebraic sacrificial ideas, wherein the innocent bears away the sins of the guilty, to quote exactly my words or to comprehend their meaning. Why should you accept as true this sacrificial conception, which is against the educated reason of to-day and is recognized as false, immoral, unreasonable and inefficient, and against which every humane conscience protests vehemently?"

"But you are worthy children of your fathers who condemned Galileo because he declared the earth to be round, when the Bible said it was flat, for you do not judge by evidence, but by traditions."

"But, Lord," protested I, "do we not show by this fidelity to Thy spoken word how much we reverence Thee?"

"This respect for my alleged words would be highly commendable," answered the Spirit, "if it were proven that I did really speak the words attributed to me. But as long as this is not established none has any right to build binding dogmas on such a frail foundation as words of doubtful origin."

"You have with you men of learning, of erudition, who have studied the Gospels and have determined what comes

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from Christ and what comes from His disciples; listen to them, and form your judgment.

"But remember, O friend, that I am not contained wholly in these Scriptures, my eternally developing spirit is greater than they. I am greater than the Gospels.

"Believe me, friend, my true Gospel is still a saving power for this generation, but what part of it? Is it my miraculous birth, my sonship with God, my life, my death, all the strange imaginings of men? What is, O my disciple, according to thee, the saving part of my Gospel?"

"O Lord," answered I, "it is the power of Thy example, for Thou hast helped man to realize, by Thy own life, that he could become as perfect as Thou wert morally perfect."

And the Spirit said: "Verily, thou hast spoken truly. For I did not come to placate an angry God by offering myself as a sacrifice for the guilty; neither did I come as a substitute for the sinner, for, by what miracle can the sufferings of an innocent, a stranger, clear away the sinner's guilt, which is a matter personal to him. The redeeming power of an innocent's sufferings can only become efficient by touching the guilty's heart, but in this sorrowing for the sins of the world I was not alone, for every true prophet, every idealist, every righteous man suffers for the sins of others and bears their iniquities in the same manner in which I have suffered for your iniquities and have borne the burden of your sins; and even some men have laid down their lives, as I did mine, for the redeeming of their fellow-men.

"Is it not the will of God that the innocent suffer for the guilty; if this is unfortunately a reality it is not due to the divinity, but it is merely a consequence of human solidarity, and is due to the fact that ye are members of one body, which is affected by the sins of each one of you."

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Then I said to Him: "O Lord, men love to see their beliefs condensed in formulas and creeds that they can easily grasp, wilt Thou not give us a new creed?"

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But He answered, saying: "What are creeds? They are of no necessity to him who possesses the living truth. But, if thou desirest a short summary of what I have taught thee so far, write as follows:

"I believe in the Universal Spirit that fills heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ our brother, one of His Children, who was conceived, like all of us, carnally of man, spiritually of the Spirit, and was born of a woman. He incarnated the Spirit, through natural process, as fully as is possible to man, thereby making Himself our everlasting Model. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and died, Martyr of the Gospel He revealed to men, He was buried, His Spirit rose from the dead and now is living forever among us. I believe in the brotherhood of men, in the communion of the true children of the Spirit, in the coming of the Kingdom of Christ on earth, in the resurrection of our spirit and in its life everlasting. Amen."

XII

ONE Sunday when we went out of some church in which the minister had delivered long prayers, the Master's Spirit spoke to me, saying:

"Friend, the men of to-day have a strange conception of prayer. Their ancestors offered sacrifices to their gods to placate or conciliate them, but the men of the present have a less disinterested view, they only ask favors of their god. They make of Him a general distributor of all the things they wish, some huge Prayer-in-the-Slot Machine, out of which they expect everything just for the asking."

"But, Lord," protested I, "art Thou not responsible for this conception? Hast Thou not told us: 'Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name ye shall receive'?"

Then His Spirit grew indignant and rebuked me, saying:

'What does *in my name* mean, and what does my name

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stand for? Is it for your petty needs and small ambitions? Is it for your material or your spiritual needs?"

"Lord," said I, "I think 'in my name' stands for our spiritual needs."

"Thou hast spoken truly," said the Master, "whatever help ye shall ask the Spirit for your spiritual needs, that ye shall receive. All other things are only accessory and depend on purely human agencies."

And I protested again, saying: "Hast Thou not taught us also to say: 'Give us this day our daily bread'? What hast Thou meant then, if not that we should pray to the Father for our material wants?"

"Friend," answered the Spirit, "hast thou not noticed how these few words of my prayer: 'Give us this day our daily bread' came only after the spiritual part, thus showing men that spiritual things had in my mind precedence over material ones? Have I not also said: 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all things shall be added unto you'?"

"And even the fact that I prayed for material things should not forever force you to follow my lead, for, since, the Spirit has led you into more light, and progress has induced you to abandon the conception of a God intervening in your material affairs.

"For the inner God which has revealed Himself to you has nothing to do with rain, sunshine or drought, which are climatic agencies, nor with commercial prosperity, abundance or scarcity of labor, which regulate it, for these things are due to human agencies. Neither is the modern God responsible for famine, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, destructive fires, inundations, railroad accidents, which are all due to secondary causes, independent of His will.

"Why should you therefore pray to Him, in order to be delivered from things over which ye have found Him to have no control? Nothing forced the inhabitants of Pompeii or Martinique to live at the foot of the volcanoes which destroyed them. Whosoever does not keep away from dan-

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ger is exposed to it, and all the gods in heaven cannot deliver them from the consequences of their ignorance. Clear you then your God of all responsibility for disasters Himself could not prevent."

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Then my Spirit objected to the awful isolation where it found itself without the familiar idea of a God taking a special care of each individual, and I said:

"O Master, are we then left alone in this universe to fight our battles and can we expect no outside help? Shall our imploring voice find no other echo than the eternal silence of the divinity?"

And His Spirit answered me: "How shall you be alone when you have God left in all the realm of feelings and emotions both ethical and religious? Your God shall be all the purer, once freed from all the mercenary thoughts heretofore attached to your conception of Him as a helper in material things. Limited to the domain of conscience He can be to you an infinite source of power, thought and ideals. Do not weep like the monk Serapion, when his anthropomorphic idea of God was shattered, because reason shows your God absent from the daily material events of your life, but be of good cheer, for, as the abandonment of anthropomorphic ideas was a step forward, so will be the abandonment of the idea of a God mixed directly in the small affairs of your existence; moreover, how could you think yourselves alone when you can be linked as before with the universal spirit, whom you can call Father, with whom you are identical in substance and who is ever willing to dwell in you, if you open to Him your heart?"

"Besides, have you not the promise that my spirit shall be with you until the end of the world?"

"Spirit of Christ," said I then, "wilt Thou not teach us these things in some new prayer?"

"True prayer, O friend, can only mean communion with

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the absolute of all moral ideals. Keep yourselves therefore in tune with these and your life shall be an eternal prayer. It is good thus to pray, it is good for the part to commune with the whole, for the relative to search union with the absolute. Such communion invigorates and refreshes the individual soul, which, isolated from the greater soul, would decay and die. So, whenever you are weary, down-hearted and spiritually weak pray, for communion with the ideal is to the soul what food is to the body.

“When you need to be restored in the spirit, pray you then thus: ‘O Universal Spirit, Absolute of Holiness, of Righteousness, of Love, Truth and Purity, I want to dwell in Thee and I desire Thee to dwell in me! Be Thou my daily inspiration, strength and help, so that I can live the Life of the Spirit and thereby show others how to live it also.’ Amen.

“Such a prayer will be sufficient for your spiritual and moral needs. For, how can one of you be unholy when he desires with all his soul strength, the absolute of holiness to dwell in him, unrighteous when he longs truly for the absolute of righteousness, unloving when he wishes sincerely for the absolute of Love, or untrue and impure when he really craves for the possession of the absolute of truth and purity?

“No man could desire all those things sincerely without being already in possession of them, at least in part.

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“As to the satisfaction of your material needs, depend on your qualities of energy, strength and will power, do not look for any other help.

“For centuries man has expected a divinity to do what he could do himself, what only himself could do. Do not, either, expect the triumph of moral ideals to come in this world through outside intervention or interference, as a gift, for verily, this triumph depends on your own efforts.

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“Too much reliance is put to-day, among the children of God, upon the real influence He exerts upon the moral advancement of the world. Remember, the Spirit can do nothing without you, do not therefore be spiritually lazy and expect it to do things for you.

“Do not sometimes mourn and despair, crying: ‘There is no justice, love, righteousness, probity and purity in this world,’ for if you be pure, honest, righteous, loving and just, there shall be at least in this world the justice, love, righteousness, probity and purity you shall have brought into it. You are co-laborers with God.

“It depends on you also that the beatitudes which I have proclaimed shall come to be realized.

“The meek shall inherit the earth if *you* help them do it by reproducing in your own lives the life of the meek, not by approving the strong and the haughty.

“They that mourn shall be comforted if *you* comfort them.

“The merciful shall obtain mercy, if *you* show mercy unto them.

“The Kingdom of Heaven shall belong to them that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake if *you* help them to promote its coming by standing by them, otherwise they shall fight in vain.

“For nothing comes in this world, in the moral realm, that does not come first through some of you.

“Verily, I say unto you again, the Kingdom of God is within you and depends on you for its coming.”

XIII

HIS Spirit came once with me to a conference of ministers and doctors of divinity. We heard the different reports about the activity of the Church they represented in the foreign and home missions.

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After the business papers had all been listened to, there came before the conference the case of a certain minister who was to be examined for heresy. He held, preached, and caused to be published in book form, dissenting views on the fundamental doctrines of the confession he belonged to. Among other minor divergences from the creed of his church, he denied the virgin birth, the trinity and the atonement.

His case had been lingering for several years, for he found many a supporter among the younger members of the ministry who were more or less imbued with the new theology. But to-day the ancient defenders of the faith were to rally around the confession and take a final decision.

After a heated discussion and an able defense by the indicted one's advocate and representative, the vote was taken and, by a large majority, the conference decided to ask the delinquent brother to resign from the ministry. Some younger members, having protested, were silenced vehemently by their elders.

After the conference some of the learned men gathered around the supper table, and I sat among them, accompanied by my silent and invisible friend, the Master's Spirit.

During the supper, which was quite lively, a spirited discussion arose on the different aspects of the case which had just been settled. Some of the representatives of the new spirit were not entirely satisfied and said so, but the majority was pleased with the day's work, and one of the D.D.'s present resumed the general opinion when he said, at the end of an answer delivered to refute and confound all opposition to the decision that had been taken: "If the Lord had attended our conference He would have been very much pleased with what we have done to-day."

Then the Spirit of Christ which had been protesting within me since the beginning of the proceedings, prompted me to rise, and I replied to the good brethren, saying:

"If the Lord were present, do you know what he would

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say? 'Are these the men that sit in my pulpit and in the seat of Moses? What have they all been talking about, and for what crime have they cut one of their number from the ministry?

" 'I never heard of those dogmas for denying which they have just condemned a brother.

" 'Did I go about Judea and Galilee preaching theology and condemning heretics?

" 'My people is everywhere the prey of the plunderers and of the money power, and they sit here reproving one another for dissenting views on academical questions! Is there no more serious duty for you?'

* * * * *

" Hear you now what Christ would say about your dogmas: 'What to me is a divinity which you preach and which I understand in another sense than you?

" 'What to me is a trinity which I never mentioned?

" 'What do I care for my alleged virgin birth or my pre-natal state?

" 'What care I for an atonement which is immoral and which could never have taken place?

" 'What to me is a resurrection of the flesh which is at once impossible and unnecessary?

" 'I did not send my disciples to preach these things, but to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God. I did not send them to preach dogmas, but the repentance and forgiveness of sins.

" 'Why not come back to my word and leave alone my person, which you have put above my teaching, my word and my life?'

* * * * *

As they all sat there, speechless with astonishment, the Spirit of Christ urged me on:

" 'You have falsified my Gospel, the Gospel of Christ,

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with doctrines of which you have made the doors of heaven, opened to those who accept them, closed to those who refuse them.

“ ‘What do I care for doctrines of which I never had a suspicion?

“ ‘You go around preaching I came to save men from the consequences of the fall.

“ ‘How could I save them from a fall which never took place?

“ ‘You go around quieting your flocks and yourselves with the thought: God shall impute to us the merits of His Son.

“ ‘Fools that ye are! The pagans and the Romanists shall precede ye in the Kingdom of Heaven, for they at least feel the moral imperative to do something in order to gain access to the Kingdom, but you lull yourselves to sleep on the pillows of imputed righteousness and salvation by faith!

“ ‘Verily I say unto you: if you have no other righteousness than the one that shall be imputed to you you shall stand naked before the judgment of the Spirit!

“ ‘Salvation by faith has made you slothful and salvation by works has made you mercenary. Paul and Luther, and the theologians may have told you that you are saved by faith, and not by works, but I tell you you are saved neither by faith nor by works, but by the Spirit of God which dwelleth within you!

“ ‘For if ye have in your souls the Spirit of God, ye will have faith and ye will do the works!

“ ‘For he that hath the Spirit of the Son of Man shall do His works.

“ ‘Your theologian teachers may have told you, in the name of old texts, that God has forgiven the sinners because I bore vicariously their punishment, thus making atonement for their sins, but I tell you, in the name of reason and conscience—the only authorities that you can have, the only ones I had—that a God who needs a sacrifice of blood in

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order to forgive, can be the God of the ancient Hebrews, but He cannot be my Father and the God of modern times!

“ ‘I have given you the parable of the Prodigal Son, to show you how readily the father was ever willing to forgive his erring and repentant son.

“ ‘How much more, O men of little understanding, is God willing to forgive the repentant sinner, without the shedding of any one’s blood, and if any one among you is willing to forgive without a blood sacrifice, how can God, your Heavenly Father be less generous than one of you?

“ ‘Verily I say unto you, you are cleaned by the inner presence and growth of my spirit within you, and not by any one’s blood, shed at any time in history.

“ ‘For by what magic can any man’s blood, shed once, purify all the souls of the future? And if they are cleaned in advance why should they strive to be pure?

“ ‘Fools and blind! With your doctrines ye have made men parasites of the blood of Christ until they feed on it like spiritual bacteria!

“ ‘Stop ye therefore preaching, as Paul did, Christ crucified, and proclaim the living Spirit of Christ that can still be present among you.

“ ‘Preach you instead of dogmas the call of the Spirit to a higher life.’ ”

Then the ministers recovered from their astonishment and they asked me in anger: “What is thy authority for speaking as thou dost? We know *our* authorities, we know that God spoke to Christ and to the apostles, but thee, none knows whence thou comest?”

I answered them: “My authority is that my ideal is higher than your ideal and my God nearer the truth than yours. My authority is the same as Christ’s: the power of truth. God has spoken to me in the same manner that He spoke to Jesus and to the Apostles. My authority, as Christ’s, is the truth, and it rests on her only. If you can prove that my words are not true, do not believe them.”

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And they answered me: "We believe in Moses, in Christ and in the Apostles."

Then I retorted: "I am sent by the same Spirit as the prophets and the apostles, the same inner force compels me to restore the truth and to destroy the superstitions that have been grafted on the true Christ."

Then the doctors clamored against me and one of them seized me, saying: "Thou settest thyself up as our Teacher and thou art not even a D.D.!"

"Neither was Christ," said I. "But I did not come to teach you," retorted I, "but to restore Christ in His true place. For the apostles were men of their age, they saw Christ in the light of their time, their views of Him were obscured by the ideas and superstitions of their epoch, why should mankind be condemned forever to accept unchallenged their peculiar conception of Christ?"

"Has not this century of light the right to free itself from apostolic errors, or will the words of a dead apostle prevail eternally against the living truth and the most sacred protests of conscience against some of His interpretations of Christ and His life's work?"

Thereupon they cried vehemently: "Paul's Christ suffices for us, and we want no other!"

Then I went from their midst in sorrow, because they refused to hear the voice of reason and preferred to it their bygone traditions and ancient texts.

XIV

THE Spirit of the Master rose within me one Sunday that we came out of church, against the idolatry of which His person was the object. For He had often noticed that churchmen seemed to give more importance to Him than to God in their rituals, prayer and sermons.

He protested vehemently against the generally accepted idea that men could only come to God through Him.

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“I have been a Jew,” said He, “therefore a monotheist, and I have never set myself up as a mediator between God and men. Verily, as freely as I came to the Father can you come to Him and you need no mediator. If I have said, ‘No man cometh unto the Father but by me,’ it means that you cannot find Him unless I show you the way, meaning my life and my teaching. You cannot find the Father in nature, but in me only; I am the discoverer, the revealer of the Fatherhood of God.

“Moreover, have I ever put forward my personality as an object of worship? Did I speak as myself or as only the mouthpiece, the *mask* of the Spirit who sent me? Have I not said: ‘There is one greater than I,’ and ‘the Father is greater than I?’

“Why, therefore, do men worship me as the equal of the Father, and since when is the part as great as the whole?

“They have made of me God and made me to stand among men as an object of disunion, and what divides them? My divinity, a divinity which I never proclaimed in the sense they have interpreted it.

“I who came to draw all men to me—not to me as a person or a name—but to the ideas I represented, am now an object of division and discord.

“Go thou, therefore hence, O my disciple, and tell those that sit in my pulpit: ‘Preach you the unity of God, and the unity of the Spirit, and let my person die if necessary that men be united as children of a common father, all, Jews, Mohammedans, Buddhists, pagans, Catholics and Protestants!’

‘For I would willingly die again so that my spirit of love shall live among you.

“What is to me the vain honor of a divinity compared to the priceless boon of seeing all men united as children of the same Spirit?

“Proclaim you my humanity if by so doing you shall draw all men to me and let this alleged divinity of mine, as you

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interpret it, join, in the dust of the past, all the dead dogmas of long dead religions! Verily, God is one!

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“ ‘For what is divinity?

“ ‘Is it the possession of supernatural powers? No, for there are no supernatural powers, and whoever made the laws of nature does not violate them to prove or disprove any of your pet theories, and all your prayers combined could not change one iota of the immutability of law.

“ ‘Is it a supernatural birth? Lo, there has never been such a birth since the world is a world, for law was the same in the past as it is to-day, and such a birth has never been recorded.

“ ‘I ask you again: What is divinity? Is it doing something no other man can do? Lo, there was never such a man, for whatever one has done another can do. I was no exception to the rule, for have I not told you, ‘you shall do greater things than I’?

“ ‘What then is divinity?

“ ‘You go saying: ‘God is spirit,’ and you are right, therefore divinity must be of the spiritual order, and the one among you who comes nearest to the spiritually divine should be clothed by you with divinity, if this word is necessary to you.

“ ‘Divinity is moral greatness; the greatest morally and spiritually is the most divine, and he need not perform any miracles to stay divine.

“ ‘I ask you then: If your ideal of God would incarnate itself and live on earth, could it be more than a perfect man? No.

“ ‘Now, I, Jesus of Nazareth, have come among you as a model man, as the image of the Father, and it is through my life as a perfect man, that you must discern my relationship with the Absolute, with God, my so-called divinity.

“ ‘Let not your mind be deceived by that word, for it

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means only my spiritual likeness unto the Father, unto the Absolute of all moral perfection, it does not mean supernatural powers.

“ ‘Now, it is because of the feeling of my unity with the moral and spiritual ideal which I called Father, that I could have said without blasphemy, as a revealer of God: ‘Whoever hath seen me hath seen the Father.’ Therefore, if the Father is divine in your eyes, through His spiritual perfection, I, being like Him, am divine also, and so is every perfect man.

“ ‘My identity and my unity with the Spirit are the proofs of what you call divinity, and, verily, you need no others, be they miracles or Gospel texts.’ ”

XV

I WENT with His Spirit to the churches of the land, and He commented wonderingly on the great variety of denominations which we encountered among them.

“Friend,” said He, “I had left but one body of disciples when I went away from this world, they were all united as one family; moreover, I did not organize any Church, nor left any creed, how is it then that men, who call themselves my followers, are divided into so many different organizations?”

“The reason of this, O Master,” answered I, “seems to be due to the fact that men have created between themselves artificial distinctions to which they cling more than to the central truths of Thy teaching.

“On account of these distinctions, O Lord, Thy disciples are divided to-day into countless sects, each one thinking itself nearest to Thy heart. They have established hair-splitting differences between themselves on points of doctrines or sacraments.

“Some believe in the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome,

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and others do not; some believe in Apostolic succession, and others do not. Some believe Thou art really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, and others that Thou art not. Some baptize by immersing the head only, others the feet, others the whole body, and some use no water at all.

"Some believe in Thy second coming, and expect it every day, while others think it will happen only in a spiritual sense.

"Thus, O Master, hundreds of such minor differences create a hundred sects, and if those don't anathematize each other any more, as they did in the good old times, it is because of the general indifference of the public to sectarian questions."

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But, when he had been more in contact with the churches, when we had visited them for years, listened to their preaching, talked to the men who represented them, studied the spirit which animated them, the Spirit of Christ groaned in anguish and his anger rose within me, and when the cup was full, He said to me:

"Friend, tell the heads of the churches who pretend to represent me:

"Hear ye, High Priests, Chief Priests and Spiritual Leaders of my people, what is there in common between you and me that you call yourselves my representatives?

"I am now gone nigh unto two thousand years and it is a pathetic fact that this world has never, in all that time, known true Christianity!

"From the very beginning of my era, my Gospel has been falsified and you go on perpetuating these same errors in your respect for the traditions.

"For centuries you have been preaching theology, doctrines and dogmas, instead of the coming of the Kingdom of God, instead of the word of life.

"I have been the friend of the sinner, the down-trodden and the lowly, but you have always sided with their oppres-

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sors, and to-day yet you side with their enemies, and are like dumb dogs, that will not bark against the money power. You have been the mainstay of the rich and have helped to sanction the despoiling of the poor by proclaiming that God was the dispenser of wealth. You have been the mainstay of kings and tyrants by saying, after Paul, that 'all authority was from God,' thereby condemning your own forefathers, who have delivered this land from tyranny.

"You have been the pillars of slavery by preaching that, 'Canaan shall be the servant of his brothers.'

"This age has been a time of enlightenment, and progress has gone forward with wonderful strides; everything has moved; the Church alone stood still in the ruts of the past. No, she has even tried to stop the free flight of human thought. With senile hands she has attempted as usual to thwart humanity in its intellectual evolution. To-day the masses keep away from the churches, and the intelligent are long since alienated, but you still cling to the old texts and traditions.

"When any one of my disciples, in the pulpit, has tried to bring into the darkness of the Church some of the outside reason you have cast him out of the ministry, saying: He preaches against the Church and the creed! You fools and blind! What is the Church and what is the creed? Are they something immutable and perfect that cannot be changed?

"You drive out of my pulpit the free consciences who can no more recite the lessons you have taught them, and you go searching the land high and low to find candidates for the ministry. But you will soon have to accept the dunce and the half-witted, for these alone to-day will do no thinking of their own.

"This age needs intellectual and spiritual giants to keep firmly the helm of the ship of Christ, and the Church will put forth pygmies and Gospel parrots!

"And still you go, lamenting the decay of preaching and

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the loss of the Church's authority, while you cling desperately to the last shreds of your former prestige.

"Behold! You have undermined the authority of my Church and now my oppressed people look elsewhere, even to the ungodly for guides and helpers!

"But why should the people take you as His leaders? Have you not always sided with His oppressors? Are you not to-day the allies and the minions of the rich?

"What is the measure favorable to the people's interests which ye have not opposed?

"Rather than side with the people, you have always licked the hand that dispensed you salary, and barked against them on behalf of those that paid you! And, where the people demanded his rights in this world, you hypocrites have shown him heaven as a compensation for them!

"But woe unto you! for to-day my people refuses to be kept on the leash by your hands. No longer can you present him the next life as a sop for his rights in this one. Lo, he growls, he shows his teeth, and the same avengeful hour that shall sweep away the money power, shall sweep you away also, ministers of my Church, his faithful servants, if you do not repent!

"Let every one that sits in my pulpit listen to the voice of his conscience, and blessed is he who can hear my words without it smiting him, for this one is my true disciple!"

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When I had arrived at the end of my investigations of the religious side of our social order in the light of His Spirit, I pondered deeply over all I had seen and all He had told me. As I was sad at the conclusions of my cogitation, His Spirit quieted me.

"Friend," said He, "all the signs I have seen show that there is in preparation, in the minds of men, a religious reformation next to which the sixteenth century reformation was but child's play.

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“ If religion and Christianity want to keep any hold on modern men, they will have to be renewed from root to branches.

“ In the coming upheaval the very existence of any God will be called in question, and no expounding of old texts, no exhibition of Scriptural authorities, will save religion from the fire of reason’s crucible.

“ But, be thou not dismayed, for whatever in the religious idea will be recognized as useful or necessary, shall be preserved, and true religion shall emerge, purer and better from the ordeal; as to the dross, it is good that it should perish.”

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Then the Spirit of the Master and I extended our inquiry to the more social side of our civilization.

PART II

HIS SPIRIT ON SOCIAL TOPICS

I

As the Christ had always been a friend of the humble and the down-trodden, of the sick and the broken-hearted, His Spirit turned me toward such, and He wanted to be among them again, as He had been of old.

And thus it happened that we went together in the haunts of the poor people of the cities. We saw the houses where they lived, the shops where they worked, the stores where they bought their goods. We lived with them, we sat at their table, listened to their talk, and went with them to their places of amusement.

We learned of their trials, their tribulations, their thoughts, their fears and their hopes. Their existence was dull, joyless, prosaic, with many cares, much misery and little pleasure.

And the Spirit of the Master sank within me many a time when we beheld the present condition of the poor people, of those that have to work in the humblest work shops and factories to earn just enough not to starve. Their condition was so different from the one of His own people, who were happy in their humble pursuits, for in His time there were no great factories to shut them in, and almost every one lived under his own fig tree or had his own small shop or trade; few artisans employed more than three or four helpers, and the industrial system of to-day was unknown. Master and helper lived together as brothers, there was no difference between them, and the servant sat at his master's table, as in patriarchal times.

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We visited one day the houses in the poorest districts of the East Side of New York, the tenements of the lowly.

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There we saw whole families living, some in cellars, some in basements, some in two rooms, some in one room only, and even these had boarders. Young and old, men, women and children were huddled together in an appalling promiscuity, and filth, moral and material, was their environment.

Sunshine and fresh air never penetrated those dwellings, which had become hotbeds of contagious diseases, where successions of tenants came in only to die and be carried away to their last resting place. These houses were unbearable in the summer from the heat, and in the winter from the cold, for coal was often beyond the means of their tenants. All these dwellings were maintained so because they paid large returns to their owners, who waxed fat on these poor people's money.

In the streets, where these houses were plentiful the harlots openly plied their trade before the children, a dreadful example to the young, who elbowed them constantly, and were corrupted by this awful contact, until they knew no more the difference between vice and virtue.

There also, in the worst quarters, the rum shops and the cheap saloons were plentiful and were retailing cheap death to their customers. These places were full, almost day and night, with a heterogeneous population who spent their time in drinking, smoking and gambling at cards, for these were the only places where men could satisfy their craving for the society of their fellow-men.

And thus lived millions of human beings in other cities, a whole underworld where moral degeneration and crime were rampant, and where disease was endemic, a constant menace to the rest of the towns. All over the country, in every large center of population, such ulcers were to be found, a reflection on any civilization.

When we had finished our journey through the slums of the land, His Spirit said to me:

"Friend, how can a being in the image of God, how can a child of the Spirit grow in such an environment?"

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“It were saner to expect roses to grow in the gutter and figs on thistles than moral creatures to thrive in such an atmosphere of degeneracy.

“Even the best seed, planted in such a soil, would grow up as an evil plant. Myself, had I been raised in such an environment, would not have been better than one of these; how can a man morally weaker than I live there a life of moral beauty?

“Friend, those that suffer such iniquities to subsist in the great cities create conditions that will destroy them, for men are all solidary of one another, what affects one part of the social body affects the whole.”

And His Spirit commented also on the strange logic which prevailed in our civilization: “You maintain schools for crime and vice in those cities, where you nurture criminals, and then you build courts of justice to condemn them, and jails to lodge them in. Were it not preferable to first suppress the places where the vicious plant grows than to eradicate it afterwards when it has borne its evil seed?

“But, friend, as to the condition of the poor of the lower strata of your society, it is not one jot better than in my time. If there is a Christian civilization in thy land, it is not in the poorest quarters of your great cities that it can be found. For nowhere prevails a condition more appalling and more desperate—no, not even in pagan lands!”

II

AFTER we had seen the tenements of the poor, His Spirit came with me another time to visit the rich parts of the town. And the people we met there were neatly dressed they looked prosperous, well fed, happy. Their surroundings were clean and they bore all the earmarks of luxury. No saloons there, but big club houses, the meeting places of the people; no cheap places of amusement, but theaters,

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big churches, nice dwellings in clean streets. As mansion after mansion met our gaze, His Spirit was filled with astonishment at the contrast existing between what we had seen before and what we saw now, and He asked me:

"Friend, who liveth there, and why is there such a striking difference between these palaces and the houses we visited before? I thought that I would find less inequality two thousand years after my death."

"Because, O Lord, these are the living places of the rich, who have enormous fortunes enabling them to erect such dwellings."

"What a sad difference between the people of this part and the people in the other parts of the town!"

"Yes, O Master, there is an overwhelming difference. Thou knowest the life of the poor, but these rich people here have all the joys of life that money can procure. They can enjoy every day which God made without caring for to-morrow's bread, while the laboring masses have to take their Sunday how it comes, rain or shine. In the heat of the summer the rich move to cool places on distant mountains, and in winter they fly to the balmy shores of the Atlantic or the Mediterranean. They can spend their days in idleness, while retinues of servants spare them the material cares of life. Fine cooks prepare for their table the culinary delicacies of the world, and theirs are the oldest and rarest wines. Theirs are also the treasures of art, literature, poetry and music. When they desire a work of art, one of the world's masterpieces in statuary, bronze or painting, they acquire it. For them only the artist cogitates and creates; for them the jewelers' stores have their diamonds, rubies and other precious stones, all their treasures of delicately wrought and chased fine metals.

"In fine, O Lord, these are the spoiled children of the present social order."

"Why have the rich such fortunes and why are their lives so different from the life of mechanics?" queried the Mas-

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ter. "Have they worked so much more than their poorer brothers, or are they so much more intelligent?"

"Not necessarily, O Master," answered I. "Some work more than the poor, but the majority work much less, some even don't work at all, and they are not, as a rule, more intelligent than the great middle class."

"Then why should they have more than the others, if they do no more labor, or are no more intelligent?"

"Well, Master, some of them have inherited their money, and others have made it, legally or not, in trade, commerce or industry; some have made it in the gambling houses of Wall Street; some have made it by obtaining unlawful rebates, others by watering stocks, others by financing railroads and adjudging themselves large dividends. Some have simply stolen it, and others have made it through *graft*. But all have made it with the help of their fellow-men."

"Friend, are there many of those rich people in this land?" queried the Master.

"Our country, O Lord, glories in five thousand millionaires, owning fifteen billion dollars, while ten of them own between themselves two billions, and one alone owns one billion dollars!"

"What manner of a land is this," said the Lord in surprise, "that allows such an accumulation of wealth to take place?"

"Yes, Master, and what is more, those enormous fortunes go on increasing forever. Two-thirds of the increase of the nation's wealth are derived by them every day, and are being driven in fewer and fewer hands, until five per cent. of this people own ninety-five per cent. of this country's wealth, claim it as their own, and spend it on their own."*

"What then, O my friend, is left to the rest of this people?"

"Well, Lord, four million families have to exist on a yearly income of four hundred dollars; three millions are

* See works of Ch. B. Spahr, James Bryce, Waldron, etc

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paupers, who have less than that, while the Oil King alone is said to have a yearly income of sixty million dollars."

"But how can such inequalities be permitted in a republic and in a Christian land?" said the Lord. "What can these rich people do with such enormous fortunes?"

"Some live in luxury and ostentation, offending the rest of the land by their vulgar and tasteless display. Most of them, O Lord, have done nothing to earn their money; they do nothing to increase it, and still it increases continually, and the only worry of rich people is to think how they can possibly spend their income."

"But, have there been no means of safety taken to prevent such accumulations from becoming a public danger? Don't the rulers of this people know that Babylon, Egypt and Rome went down when all their wealth was concentrated in a few hands?"

"There is a certain unrest in this country, O Master, and there has been talk of establishing an inheritance tax, which would almost be equivalent to a restitution."

"Such a tax, O friend, amounts to saying: 'Let the hog gorge himself while alive, but make him disgorge when he is dead.' The ideal is to make the gorging impossible by destroying the spirit of hoggishness and selfishness which leads to it," said the Lord.

"Yes, O Master, and also by framing strong laws forcing the hogs to be unselfish," said I. "For I fear hogs have no love for ideals or unselfishness, and it has to be forced upon them."

"Where you have laws," concluded the Spirit, "you shall have lawyers to get around them. Let rather every one have the law in his own heart."

* * * * *

When the Spirit was better acquainted with our class distinctions between rich and poor, He grew indignant at the thought of them and said to me: "Friend, I shall talk

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through thee to the rich of the land, tell them in my name:

"You proclaim to all the world that this country knows no class distinctions while yourselves have built an aristocracy of money more exclusive than any aristocracy of birth and far less noble. You have erected around yourselves fences and walls of gold from which you exclude all the less fortunate, until it is as hard for a poor man to enter your palaces as it was for the serf of yore to enter his master's castle.

"This is a republic where there ought to be at least a semblance of equality, but you, the rich, constitute in it a state within the state, with your own class as rulers, your own laws and your own justice.

"When you sit in your cushioned pews on Sunday and hear your hired preacher's discourse on the brotherhood of men, you nod your head in solemn approval, but how can you, without hypocrisy, call brother a being from whom such a mass of wealth and such a social distance separates you?

"Know you not that nothing is more against my Spirit than such monstrous inequality of fortune? Or, perhaps, do you still labor under the delusion, which your hired preachers have instilled in you, that it is your God who gave you this wealth? Just as if you did not know how you or your fathers have gotten it! How long do you think that this state of affairs is going to last, where the few have everything and the masses nothing? How long will you be able to say: 'My money is mine, I can do what I please with it,' when you know very well that your money comes from all, and that you are responsible for it before men and before God?

"Do you not heed the lessons of history, who teaches you that there is a day when social injustice must stop, when iniquities are avenged? Do you not see the first glimmer of a day of reckoning? Do you not hear the faint rumblings of the approaching storm?

"Perhaps if you know how to discern the signs of the

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times, will you be able to ward off the day of reckoning, the fatal *dies irae* already looming up on the horizon of time.

"But verily, as the French noblemen, on a memorable night, laid down their unjust privileges on the altar of equality, you will have to lay down your unjust wealth on the altar of human brotherhood, as a sacrifice to social justice. But if you heed not the voice of reason and righteousness, it shall come to pass that, when the cup is full, the people shall rise in anger, lay their hands on your ill gotten gains, and come into their own again. And, verily, on that day there shall be rejoicing in heaven, for the time of retribution and justice will be at hand!"

III

GOING through our big cities some other time I wanted to show His Spirit that all was not bad in our civilization. I visited with Him our great hospitals, orphan houses, alms houses, charitable institutions, homes for the aged and the infirm. We saw all our universities, colleges and libraries, our magnificent schools and churches.

And the Spirit of the Master was elated, and He commended highly all these institutions, imbued with the Christian spirit.

Later on we came upon some tall buildings, and the Spirit wanted to know what they were.

"Some of these belong to the great newspapers of the land, others are the property of some life insurance companies," said I. When I had explained to Him what these were, He approved them heartily.

"All is not bad in this civilization of yours," said He, "and your age shows a great progress over mine in the founding of such social works."

"Yes, Lord," said I, "it would be unjust to deny our good points, but all is not unmitigated good in what we have

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seen. Take for instance the life insurance companies, built with the money invested to protect widows and orphans: there has been lately a great scandal attached to them when it was discovered that they were mainly doing much good to their presidents, vice-presidents, directors and agents, who had attributed themselves princely salaries—whole families of such have found in them sinecures, have waxed fat and grown wealthy as a shining example of opportunity timely grasped.

“Our universities, hospitals, schools, alms houses, homes for aged and infirm, are among the best jewels in our crown—they are efficient and as honestly conducted as can be done in this land.”

When we visited some of the newspaper buildings, the Spirit of the Master was elated within me at the thought of the masses of people they could reach every day and He said: “What a magnificent instrument for the spreading of truth! What a glory for your age to have such a weapon at your disposal for doing good!”

“Yes, Lord,” answered I, “the newspaper is a wonderful weapon for the cause of righteousness, and it could be made to do great things. But it can also, and is, used for evil purposes, to distort the truth and pervert public opinion. For, unfortunately, a great many papers are in the clutches of the money power, being owned by capitalists who have for motto: ‘We are not in business to tell the truth, but to make money.’”

“Therefore, O Christ, when truth displeases their big advertisers, subscribers or readers, those newspaper owners clothe it according to the liking of the aforesaid or hide it carefully under the bushel. So it happened that part of the press has become one of the most powerful weapons at the service of class oppression.

“Some newspapers also get their share of the campaign funds which the great political parties distribute to secure themselves in power and form public opinion.”

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"But," observed the Christ, "there must be some good in the press to compensate its evil?"

"Undoubtedly," said I. "The press is the palladium of our liberties, and the money power, through its minions in the legislature, has often tried to throttle it by appropriate bills, but the day the liberty of the press would be curtailed would be a sad one for this country."

* * * * *

He went with me in the alleys of commerce and the by-ways of trade. We witnessed together the fierce competition, the struggle of brother against brother, the robbery, thievery and trumpery going on in the marts under the name of business. We saw everywhere misrepresentation, lying, cheating and deceit universally practiced with a cheerful rascality, as everyday things of life. We witnessed the universal selling of green goods and gold bricks to the unwary and the simple of the land. We saw the failures, the broken hearts, the ruins and the suicides caused by competition; we saw nine-tenths of those engaged in the struggle fail, fall by the wayside and disappear, carried away by the undertow. We saw the successful, far from being satisfied with victory, rush on madly and greedily, to renewed grasping for money and power, until he fell in his turn, old before his age, and broken in health, having passed by the best and noblest things of life without having seen them. We saw men live small, narrow lives, all for business, just as if it had been an awful God to whom they had to offer, in perpetual sacrifice, all their thoughts, all the moments of their lives. They worshipped business as their first thought in the morning, during the day, and their last thought at retiring was for business, and even at night they dreamed of their God. They lived and never knew the sweetest joys of life. They never heard the soft appeal of nature, the noble call of art, the grave invitation of literature, the soul inspiring voice of music, or the inner sweetness of the life of the Spirit."

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The Master's Spirit, learning of all these things, sorrowed over the folly of ruined lives and wasted opportunities.

IV

WHILE we were pursuing the investigation of our social order in the light of His Spirit, the Lord was painfully shocked, for very often, in opening our morning newspapers, we found the record of some new scandal, the exposure of some political rascality, the story of numerous *grafts*, the evil doings of some great railroad financier or the prevarications of some life insurance company or bank president.

Those things would crop up regularly, like the visible pustulæ of some hidden interior disorder. The sight of them surprised the Master all the more that I had assured Him that our country was a most Christian one.

We tried to trace those evils to their source and we found them to come from the idea that a position of public or private trust was considered by the trustee only as an opportunity for private gain and personal enrichment.

We found this idea very prevalent among politicians, aldermen, representatives and senators. The politicians from on high started the ball rolling, for they were "*not in politics for their health, but for what was in it*"; the minor politicians followed, scrambling for offices, jobs and sinecures, and their retinues of petty heelers scampered after the crumbs that dropped from the big man's table. We found state and municipal politics organized as a huge *grafting* machine, whereby *bosses*, politicians of all magnitude, ward leaders and their heelers, waxed fat in the shade of the old plum tree, which they shook regularly to their mutual satisfaction.

We found the great public corporations feeding copiously the machine, in exchange for privileges and franchises which belonged to the public, but were traded and knocked down

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to the highest bidder by the representatives of the *machine* in power.

Everything was bought and sold, and, save for rare exceptions, every man had his price.

Once in a while political and financial methods were exposed in some great scandal that would reek all over the land; great indignation was expressed in the newspapers, justice was aroused. But soon everything settled down again; justice had been appeased in some mysterious way, and the crowd under the plum tree resumed its work, a little more carefully perhaps.

Great lawyers were hired by the head *grafters*, financiers and organizers of great corporations, to teach them how to keep within the limits of the law in their highway operations, and these lawyers waxed rich.

It was altogether a jolly, rollicking, diamond wearing, wine opening, high living company we found at work on the public's pockets in this Christian land of ours.

"Friend," said the Lord, "the satraps of Persia and the proconsuls of Rome were clumsy prevaricators in comparison with the systematic operators of this time. They were appointed by the imperial government and inflicted by force on their conquered victims, but here, the plunderers are put in office by, and operate with, the consent of the governed on which they live, and this is certainly an improvement on the old ways.

"Still, I dare say that the new way is not more Christian than the antique one, and if this land is Christian in any way, it must be in other things than in its politics."

V

I TOOK His Spirit with me to Wall Street, in the Stock Exchange; there we witnessed a scene worthy of Dante's "Inferno." It was a *bear* market day, and we saw, huddled around the poles, crowds of men screaming, pushing their

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way over one another, shrieking themselves hoarse, elbowing each other frantically in their anxiety to sell. At each pole one or two men were standing in this turmoil; they sold stock by hundreds and thousands of shares, lowering the price at each batch, and the others stood around, wild-eyed, hatless, collarless, selling as fast as orders could be penciled, to get at least a fair price, before the stock would tumble down, lower and lower.

A wind of silent panic was blowing over the Exchange, and, like wild madmen or howling demoniacs, the brokers would rush at each other, brandishing their memoranda books, crying at the top of their voices. And, when the gong sounded the closing, when it was over for the day, some went away broken-hearted and ruined, and others went home with a smile, rich.

As I was standing there, speechless with amazement, the Master's Spirit asked me, wonderingly:

"What is this and what are these men doing?"

"This, O Master, is the financial heart of this city, of this Christian State. Here fortunes are made without working and unmade in the twinkling of an eye. A man may walk in rich and come out poor, he may step in poor and come out rich. Here, O Lord, a few men, by the power of untold wealth can manipulate the market at their own sweet will; they ruin thousands according to their interests or enrich thousands, but they always reap the lion's share, for they play with marked cards.

"Here values are inflated or debased according to the dictates of a pool of financiers, and the best industries of the land can be run down, the worst can be artificially boosted up. Here things are not what they are, but what a few men want to make them appear.

"To-morrow, or at some other day, there will be a *bull* market, and the stock prices which have to-day been brought down, will be brought up again, and those that bought low to-day will sell and reap a harvest. Such scenes are enacted

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here every business day of the year. Here men come and risk their honor, their family's, their fortunes, their all.

"A day like this one, O Lord, means ruin for hundreds, failures, broken hearts and broken homes, suicides, untold misery and distress, it means shame for mothers, wives and daughters; it means loss of hope, of honor, of life. All this is sacrificed to the general spirit of speculation which pervades all classes, and to the triumph of the few sharp ones who go, gloating over their victory, like vultures over carrion.

"This whole street, O Lord, is the Temple of Mammon; the only god that is worshipped here, the Almighty Dollar; and it can be said also that every business house in the city is a private altar erected to his worship.

"The wisdom of our legislators shines also forth in all its brightness in the existence of this Stock Exchange, O Master, for they forbid lotteries and close small gambling houses, but they allow to run here, every day, the greatest gambling *Hell* of the world."

"Friend," said the Spirit, "I saw to-day a scene which was never equaled in its power for evil in the days of Babylon, Nineveh or Rome. For those cities, in all their wickedness, never conceived of gambling on such an immense scale, neither did they have all the moral evils that such a place carried in its wake. Verily, modern man has excelled the ancient and gone one degree farther in perversity. Probably, O friend, wilt thou tell me that some of these gamblers call themselves Christians?"

"Most certainly, dear Master, they do! Some of them are elders in Thy churches, almost all contribute to their support and some give the surplus of this tainted money to all kinds of charities and good works."

"This generation," concluded the Spirit in awed surprise, "seems to be morally blind. To its dulled perceptions evil is no more evil, thievery is only *graft*. It only sneers when it ought to grow indignant, and remains indifferent when it

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ought to rise in revolt. It is the saddest case of moral perversion the world has ever known."

VI

HIS Spirit came with me to the divorce courts of this land. There were unveiled before us an unseemly side of life, and the hidden ulcers of matrimony. We saw men and women being divorced for cause and without cause. We saw, sanctioned by law, divorces concocted in the offices of crooked lawyers. And the causes, for many a rupture of the home ties, were a farce and a mockery, being lies, fake witnesses, trumped up evidence and collusion. All over the country the divorce mills were grinding, not slowly nor fine, but quickly and coarsely, the human grist that flowed under their stones. We saw a court when ten minutes was the average time needed to pronounce a divorce.

We saw all sorts and conditions of people being separated, who, by all the laws of common-sense, should never have come together. We saw a rich man of sixty-five being divorced from a wife of twenty, whom he had married when she was only sixteen, and a man of thirty-two being freed from a wealthy wife of sixty-seven whom he had married when she was sixty-five. Thinking of the many homes so broken and of the fate of children so deprived of one or the other of their parents, the Master grew sad at heart, and as he expressed His indignation, I told Him:

"Yes, O Lord, Thou seest in us one of the most divorced nations of the world, and some of our States and cities are a by-word, even among our people. South Dakota is our great divorce center, where the aspirants of disunion flock in droves to be granted freedom, after six months' residence.

"People who want to separate always find a cause and a way, for what the law of one State does not allow the statutes of another permit, and what is illegal in one is legal

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in another, so that, thanks to the loop-holes, the candidates for matrimonial rupture can be accommodated to their mutual satisfaction.

"Consequently, O Master, since divorce is made so easy, our people rush into wedlock with reckless haste, our family ties are getting loose, and the sanctity of matrimony fares very hard, in fact, it is becoming obsolete."

"What do your churchmen think on this question of divorce?" queried the Lord.

"They cling to Thy words, as reported by the Gospel writers: 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.' Some extremists even omit the fornication clause, which they regard as an interpolation and forbid the granting of any divorce at all. Of late, Master, the causes for divorce have multiplied, and, if a few moralists deplore their frequency, the people in general do not complain. They think it better to separate what cannot stay together than sentence two beings, unfit for common life, to a life-long common misery. Master, canst Thou not issue some new commandment that shall be an authority for us to check this growing evil and shall be binding?"

"Friend," said the Master, "such commandments were possible in the childhood of the race and in a theocracy, but the only authority recognized in a democracy to-day is the will of the greatest number for their greatest good. Man works out his own salvation, sometimes clumsily, with many errors and much suffering, but in the end the solutions he finds by himself are the best. Authoritative standards are a thing of the past. The people in their clumsy law-making have found empirically in divorce laws a solution for their troubles, and no authority or text more or less sacred will ever prevail against this law of experience, and collective wisdom."

"But, Master," protested I, "how canst Thou speak

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thus when Thou hast said: 'Whom God hath joined let no man put asunder'?"

"Friend," answered He, "has God united the rich man of sixty to the young bud of sixteen? Has God united the wealthy woman of sixty-five to the young man of thirty? Is He a part in all the buying and selling of the matrimonial market? Is He involved in all the petty motives and the sensual dreams of them that seek husbands and wives? Or, has God joined these because they stood before a minister or a priest?"

"Why be surprised, then, when the higher laws of nature disjoin, through divorce courts, what man only has joined? Verily, I say unto you, the divorce evil shall go on increasing until you have reformed the very essence of marital unions.

"What is to be corrected is not the frequency of divorces which are only a remedy for a prevalent evil, but the light-mindedness and the base motives with which people rush into such an holy state as matrimony. Believe me, friend, perfect men and perfect women will make perfect unions. But there shall be no such union until the Spirit shall really join together His pure and simple children, who love each other with all their heart, with all their souls, and with all their mind and without any impure motives, without even the shadow of money hovering over them."

VII

THE Spirit having manifested the desire to see how men were living, and to investigate our social machinery in all its parts, we set out together to visit the mills, factories and shops of the land.

As I had been connected with the industrial world for twenty years, I was able to point to Him all the intricacies and the wheels of the modern system of wealth's production.

We went together to the iron mills, steel plants and coal

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mines of Pennsylvania, to the cotton mills of the South, to the spinning and cotton printing factories of New England, to the great furniture industries of the West and to the packing houses of Chicago.

Then I took the Master to the factories, shops and sweat-shops of our great cities, and everywhere was to be witnessed the great effort, and heard the noise of the millions toiling, the tremulous sigh of human labor at work creating the wealth of this country.

We listened to the wail of the population in travail, we saw the magnificent gesture of industry, and, realizing its immensity and its grandeur, the Master admired at first its majesty.

"This industrial age of yours, brother," said He, "has far outdistanced the puny social fabric of ancient times. It has organized and systematized human effort, and harnessed its energy in a way never equaled before."

"Yes, O Lord," said I, "this industrial age is a sight of incomparable beauty to whoever understands the dignity and nobleness of human labor."

"Let us now see," added the Lord, "how it has benefited the sons of man."

Then we went together and probed deeper into this age of iron and steel. We went to live with the workingman on his bench and in his house. We shared his toils, his life and his pleasures. And, while we were engaged in our inquiry, we recoiled in dismay at what we discovered.

We saw how this magnificently organized industrial system took the workingman almost from childhood, how it kept him down to just enough wages to keep his soul in its fleshy tenement, how it sucked out of him, year after year, his strength and his life's blood, how it finally dropped him on the brink of the grave, old before his age, exhausted and worn out.

We saw in the great factories of the towns, rows after rows of girls and women, bent over sewing machines, making

shirts, shirtwaists, clothing of all kinds, season after season, year after year. To them also the system gave just enough not to starve, just enough to leave their lean bodies strength to continue their toil until they, in their turn, unable to go on further, would drop in the grave. And all those willing white slaves cost nothing to their masters, who did not have to buy them or take good care of them, so when they were sick or old, others were hired to grind away their lives also.

We saw, all over this industrial world, the immoral spectacle of hundreds of men or women, working away their lives for the benefit of one, or at the most, a few men. We saw these live in possession of all that this bright civilization could produce in refinements of luxury; we saw them live in palaces, have country houses, yachts, automobiles, horses and carriages, large retinues of servants; we saw them spend in one year enough to keep hundreds of families in comfort and all this was made possible by the incessant toil of the silent masses whose lives we had witnessed.

As He listened to the wail of human labor, the heart of Christ was moved with pity. "And those," said He, meaning the working classes, "is there no hope for them in your industrial *inferno*? Shall they forever have only the dregs of life, while making honey for others?"

"None whatever, Master," said I, "unless there is a change in this social order. They will drudge and drudge, every year more bent and more tired. When they fall sick the time is carefully deducted from their small wages. If they happen to save a little from their starvation wages, disease and lack of work will absorb it. When old, they will depend on others, and when, at last, they will drag their weary bones to the grave—the first time they will really rest—they will never have known the best and sweetest things of life. Existence will have been to them an endless drudge and they will welcome death as a deliverance."

"Verily," said the Master, "I have now seen the dark

side of this bright industrial system, the white slavery." He had more yet to see.

VIII

HE came with me in the cotton mills of the South and there we saw children from eight years of age up, working ten hours and more a day. We saw them shut up in unsanitary buildings, breathing an air loaded with cotton dust and brought into contact with coarse men. We saw them deprived of all that makes child life worth living and sweet: play, sunshine, fresh air and nature's company. We saw them on the farms all over the land: drudging in the fields since the days their little limbs could move freely: a happier lot than the factory hands, but still, working beyond their ages' strength and deprived of their share of school time, the preparation for life.

He descended with me in the coal mines of the country; we saw other little ones giving away their lives in these infernos, shut up from the light of day, in the bowels of the earth, breathing the coal dust laden air, while above them the birds sang in the bushes; and the cattle in the fields, happier than they, wandered at liberty under the caress of the sun.

He came with me in the populous quarters of the great cities, and in dingy, foul-aired sweat-shops, we saw hundreds of other children huddled together hardly up from the cradle, working from dawn until late at night to help their parents earn a scant living, the few cents necessary to keep body and soul together. And all over the land, in the cotton mill, the glass factory, the sweat-shop, the farm or the working benches, were more than two million children grinding away their lives for a starvation pittance. They came in the light of this world to go back again in the night of death, after a few shambling steps in the hell of modern labor, ripe for the merciful rest of the grave. We saw those that survived,

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old before their time, gnarled in body and crooked in mind, ruined in health and spirit, a cursing, drinking, tobacco chewing horde, a slight on any civilization.

And the heart of the Master was cast down within Him at this sight, more than at any other one we had seen before.

"Friend," said He, as He saw me sorrowing at the sight of such iniquities. I am now gone from this world for two thousand years, and in all this time it has passed for being Christianized. But, verily, neither Babylon, Nineveh nor Rome had such a blot on their escutcheon as the shameless exploitation of child labor I witness in this industrial age and in this so-called Christian land—Christian, forsooth! Happy are the children in pagan lands, for they can grow up in freedom of body in God's light and sunshine! Happy are the little black waifs of Africa or of the far-away isles of the Pacific, for none takes them away from nature to shut them up, shivering, in some dark mine or factory!"

But He had one more glimpse of our industrial world.

IX

I WENT with Him once through a manufacturing town, all black with the smoke of coal, with its sky darkened by the huge chimneys which took the place of trees. Thus walking we came near an iron foundry all begrimed and grim. From it came a noise and a roar as from the toil of a thousand men.

As we were admiring its gigantic proportions and thinking of the titantic labors that were achieved therein, lo, an old man came limping by. He was all wrinkled, bent, gnarled as an old tree; his face was expressionless, rigid, his eyes were without luster, he was as the picture of Modern Labor, when it is grown old. He came to us, and pointing at the monster lying before us with a trembling finger:

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"See that mill?" said he, "I have been working there for forty years. Now I am old, and they have just thrown me out!"

And, lifting his arm toward heaven in a gesture of mute despair and vague threatening, he walked away, uttering dark curses through his toothless mouth.

Then the Lord asked me:

"What kind of a land is this that allows such iniquities? Is it the country of the pagans, or the isle of some savage tribe?"

"No, Lord, this is Christian America. Thousands of old men like the one that just passed by are every year cast out of the places where they have worked themselves into old age, by the very people they have helped to make rich."

"So this is a Christian country, indeed," said Christ. "But I have heard that in India, which is a pagan land, they take care of animals until they die of old age."

"Some people do that here also, O Lord; they pension old horses, cats and dogs, but they never think of the human beings who labored for them all their lives, and have given them the best that was in them, they let them starve alone in their old days."

"Is it a crime to be old among this people of yours?" queried the Lord.

"This country is no worse than any other in this respect, O Master, although it seems to have gone farther than in the Old World. There, a man must be really unfit not to find work, but here young people are everywhere preferred to older, and some companies have even fixed what is called the *dead limit* of age, over which no man can find employment. One of them has once lowered this limit to thirty-five years."

"But what becomes then of the men above this dead limit?" said the Lord. "Are they killed and eaten up as was the custom of some savage tribes with their old people?"

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"No, Lord, but what becomes of them is no concern of the companies, they can starve or commit suicide without disturbing the serenity of capital."

"Friend," said the Lord, "this is one of the most heartless civilizations that history has ever witnessed. Why! you have here law-makers, courts of justice and general attorneys, and no action has ever been taken against any company that thus sentences to starvation men above the dead limit?"

"No, Lord," answered I. "Moreover such an action, were it ever begun, would undoubtedly be declared unconstitutional, as being an attempt to limit man's freedom of exploiting his fellow-men."

"Has there indeed been no law enacted to save from starvation the old servant of this social order, who gave away his life for it?" said His Spirit, incredulously.

"Not in this country, O Lord. There is, it is true, a far away island of the Pacific where they have granted pensions to old workingmen, but nothing has been done in Christian America."

"Perhaps this is a poor country," observed the Lord, "too poor to take care of its old?"

"Forsooth! Lord," declared I, "this is the richest nation of the globe, and its resources are unlimited. Why, the product of an adequate inheritance tax alone could more than provide for pensioning every poor man above fifty!"

"Why has nothing been done then?" exclaimed the Lord in dismay.

"Well, Master, our political leaders have been too busy, up to now, with party politics to think of such things. It is only since one party has adopted some socialistic tendencies that they woke up lately to the fact that there is a social question. Unfortunately, O Lord, our laws are made by the rich for the rich, and no law will ever be passed by them, that will touch the arch sacrosanct of capital and take money out of the rich man's pocket."

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"What has the Church done? Has no prophet of mine lifted up his voice in defense of the down-trodden?"

"Thy Church, O Master, is vaguely aware that things are not as they should be. But its eyes have been lifted up to heaven so long that it has got a stiff neck and can hardly see what goes on here below.

"Besides, it has lost its hold on the people, and nobody heeds its voice.

"Still some noble work is done by some of Thy churches; some beautiful characters are to be found in them; they have opened charitable institutions, missions, settlements, visits to the poor and other relief work, but, in presence of the enormous work required to change the warp and woof of this social fabric, the little they do is a small palliative, and is about equivalent, for true efficiency, to a Spanish fly on a wooden leg.

"As far as prophets are concerned, there are precious few left in Thy Church. The evil lies in the fact that the ministers are salaried by the rich of their congregation, and they cannot preach against them. They are not all dumb dogs, some splendid specimens remain, and an independent voice is heard once in a while, but the majority cannot bark, for, if they did, they would lose their salary, and they must live."

"I see," said the Spirit, "that the rich of this nation are trying carefully to muzzle every voice that could speak the truth, in politics, justice, church and press, but they cannot muzzle the voice of my Spirit, which is heard in the souls of men.

"This Spirit is working silently, and, when the time of its explosion will be at hand, it will rend and tear to pieces any social order, grounded on injustice to the many and privilege to the few!"

X

AFTER our going and coming was over, I asked the Spirit of the Master what He thought of our land and our civilization, and He answered me, saying:

"Friend, a civilization where the many are only machines to make money for the few, where hundreds of lives are spent for the benefit of one man, where the unable to work and the old are cast out in the gutter, to die of want, where the strong, unmercifully crush the weak, where even child labor is harnessed to the chariot of the wealthy, such a civilization may be materially great, but it is morally small, it may be prosperous, but it is not Christian.

"For Christianity means love, and there is no room for love in a competitive social system.

"For, has my Spirit permeated this civilization that you call it Christian?

"No! more than ever man is a wolf to man, and the struggle for life is as ferocious as in the stone age.

"You do not kill with a club, or a sword, but you murder in deadly trade competition, and the battle is all the more merciless.

"You boast of your Christian ideals, but, in reality your social life is like a fierce football game, out of which the strongest emerge, somewhat broken in reputation and health, but saying: 'I am all right now, I have made my money, let God take care of the others!'

"You heartless and selfish rascals! Take you no heed of the weak you have down-trodden, of those who lie in the dust, broken-hearted or dead? Is this fraternity?

"And still you proclaim yourselves a Christian people and your presidents set this forth in their Thanksgiving proclamations!

"No! Your only God is the Almighty Dollar, and *graft*

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is his prophet! Your gospel is the gospel of Lucre, and you only worship success, however it is achieved!

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"Friend, verily I say unto thee: Greece had its helots, Rome its slaves, the medieval times its serfs, but this age has its salaried men, and labor to-day is little better than slavery of old. For capital now takes less care of its white slaves than the slave owner of old, for they cost him nothing. Woe unto any one that uses his brother's strength, talent and life to enrich himself, without sharing equitably with him the product of his labor, for such is an enemy of my kingdom and a pillar of hell!

"The enslavers of labor have made it a curse and a degradation.

"By wasting hundreds of lives for the benefit of a few, they have robbed human life of its dignity and nobleness, and half of the moral evils of this world are due to this abasement.

"The fear of losing their bread makes the laborers look down at their brothers as possible rivals, and jealousy, meanness and hatred are rampant among them. The fear of possible starvation causes more suspicion, treachery, hatred and deceit than all other causes combined, for it makes brother rise against brother, father against child, and child against parent.

"Friend, the masters of this land go, saying: 'We are the heads of enterprises and their guiding genius, we are therefore entitled to more than our less intelligent brothers.' They may be right in this, but are they entitled to everything?

"One thing is undisputable: Whoever does a lion's work is entitled to a lion's reward, this is strict justice.

"But the lion is apt to forget he belongs to the great animal family, and he takes often more than what is coming to him. To attempt to deprive him of his natural share by legisla-

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tion would lead to his extinction and to the destruction of all initiative and ambition in the strong. Once the strong extinct, there would remain only lambs, and these are not ideal material for a vital social organism. The ideal social remedy is to teach the lion altruism. He must be induced to hunt for the community instead of hunting for himself.

"Love, who is greater than Justice, must tell him to relinquish his right to a lion's share in favor of his weaker brothers. This is not charity, but love and service, without which no great social order can subsist.

"The strong are also tempted to say: 'All have the same chance to become employers and owners of wealth in this free country.' But this is false, for have the lamb and the dove the same chance in the battle for life as the lion and the tiger? Verily, some men are as lions and tigers, devouring the lambs and doves. It may be the fate of the weak to be devoured by the strong in the animal kingdom, but this should not be in a Christian land.

"Say now one word, O my disciple, to the strong: 'You, the well-clawed and long-teethed of the earth, know you that you are all members of one family; as you are the most endowed with will and intelligence, you should be the elders and guardians of the weak and less endowed, this is the ideal you should strive to attain.

"Far from using your strength and gifts for plundering your less favored brothers, you should put your talents at their service, and be your brother's keepers. By so doing only will you earn the right to call yourselves children of your Father which is in heaven. All else you may do is sham and hypocrisy.

"For my law is service, and my Spirit is a Spirit of Love.'"

XI

ARRIVED at the end of our long examination of the different aspects of our civilization, we were both sad on account of the things we had seen in this Christian nation.

"Master," said I at last, "judge us not according to our transgressions, lay not our iniquity upon us, but judge us according to Thy mercy.

"For we have sinned against Thee, we have not kept Thy commandments, we have not followed the law of love. Therefore have we fallen from grace before Thee, and the fact that other peoples are perhaps worse than we are does not clear us before our conscience."

Then the Spirit spoke to me gently, kindly, like one who sees, beyond the clouds of to-day, the clear sky of to-morrow.

"Friend," said He, "be thou not discouraged and let not the sight of evil discourage thee. What we have seen here is the eternal play of two antagonistic forces, the great battle that is ever raging in the moral universe.

"On one side are mustered the powers of evil, on the other the forces of good, and the battlefield is the hearts of men.

"Incessantly, day and night, year after year, century after century, righteousness battles against unrighteousness, altruism against selfishness, love against hatred, purity against impurity, virtue against vice, generosity against meanness. Men are only the incarnations of these warring forces. Be thou not surprised therefore to see this battle raging even more fiercely in this great country of thine. It will make the coming victory of the forces of good all the more apparent to the witnessing world.

"Thy country, O friend, needs a powerful reaction on the coarse commercialism wherein it is plunged, and whatever will cause it ought to be welcome if it purifies this great

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body from corruption. It needs a great awakening of the public conscience, a strong revival, not of Bible fetishism, but a revival of interest in the things of the Spirit.

"It must revise its standards of value, and learn to judge a man by what he is, not by what he has. It must show a higher regard for the representatives of the things spiritual, and must proportion its rewards of money and honor in consideration of the real intellectual or spiritual worth of the man. The disgraceful sight of a common pickle-maker or dry goods seller rolling in gold, when the professor, the minister and the teacher earn only a scant living, must be blotted out. This commercial age must learn how to render unto money what is money's and unto the Spirit what is the Spirit's.

"This people, O friend, has also at hand another remedy for its evils. Every man, even the worst, fears public opinion and craves consideration. Let therefore every noble soul among my disciples, let all the pure and honest in the land refuse social recognition to dishonest wealth, and there will soon be no ill acquired fortunes. Let the universities, the teachers of ethics, the pulpits and the press proclaim that it is nobler and more worthy for a man to acquire character than money. Have moral courage and refuse to shake hands with the shady politician, the *boss*, the *grafter*, and you will soon have them no more with you.

"Ostracize socially the pirates of Wall Street, the heads of the public plundering trusts, all the highway robbers of finance and industry, the heads of corporations who corrupt legislatures—instead of bowing before them and inviting them to speak before your young men. Make it an unwritten law that no man shall own more than a certain sum; regard as an unfaithful trustee any one who keeps more than that sum for himself, and you will soon have no ultra rich among you. Train your conscience so to realize human solidarity that it shall be filled with shame at the sight of social inequality and the iniquitous difference between the

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rich and the poor. Then, when it shall become a sin for some among you to be so much richer than others, there shall reign on earth, not perfect equality, which is an impossibility and not to be found in nature, but less inequality.

"But, verily, friend, this people suffers now all these crying injustices and does not rise against them because it is itself tainted with the sins of the times. It shall suffer from them until it purges itself by casting them from its own heart.

"For the people frown at the very rich, not because they feel it a sin to be rich when almost all are poor, but because they desire to be rich also and cannot. This is envy and covetousness. All such indignation has envy for its inspiration, and is not genuine and honest.

"For these people worship Mammon as much as the wealthy, and were they in the rich man's place, they would act exactly as he, and refuse social recognition to the poor.

"Let yourselves, therefore, be perfect and your social order shall be perfect; be unselfish, and it shall be unselfish; righteous, and it shall be righteous; holy, and it shall be holy!"

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To complete His teaching, for He knew well the needs of our time, the Spirit added the following words:

"Blessed are the dissatisfied with present conditions: for they are the heralds of progress!

"Blessed are they with many children: for they shall inherit the earth and benefit from the ages' labor!

"Blessed are the men of the fields: for they are away from the corruption of great cities.

"Blessed are they that love music, poetry, art and literature: for theirs are the real joys and glories of life!

"Blessed are they with little money: for they shall have little care!

"Blessed are they with few material cares: for they can live the life of the Spirit!

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“Blessed are they that live the life of the Spirit: for they possess, now already, eternal life!”

XII

THEN, as the Spirit saw me still down-hearted and discouraged, because of the un-Christian condition of the world, He gave me as a consolation His vision of the State Ideal.

Then, as the prophet of old, I saw a beautiful state wherein dwelt the men of the future.

The head thereof was a council of wise men, who had not been chosen by the politicians, for there were no such then, but by the wise and the learned, as the best and most intelligent of them, after they had given proof of their fitness and capacity to govern.

Men and women alike had seats in this council, for there reigned perfect sex equality.

There was no army and no navy in this state, for the earth enjoyed universal peace, and man was everywhere a brother to man.

There were no prisons, no courts of justice, no judges nor lawyers, for every one had the law of God in his heart.

There were no churches, for every home was an altar to the living God, and every soul a temple of the Spirit.

As the people of that state had perfected themselves, they had also perfected their God, who was no more a being whose awful justice needed a blood sacrifice, but the Absolute of all Perfection, beautiful and loving.

There was no Jew nor Gentile, no Catholic nor Protestant, but all men were children of the same Spirit and worshipped the same ideal of moral perfection.

And lo! There were in it no rich and no poor, for all class distinctions had been abolished on the altar of brotherly love. Poverty, vice, squalor, filth and the social evil had disappeared from the haunts of man, as had also the coarsest

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forms of sin. Perfect health followed from a perfect knowledge and observance of the laws of hygiene.

As men were seeking character rather than money, and, as the possession of wealth did not confer any privilege on its owners, men did no more trample upon each other to acquire gold, trying rather by healthy emulation to surpass each other in wisdom and goodness.

Then, as all men did not labor to accumulate a surplus for a few idlers, the work of the state was done in the morning hours, and the rest of the day was consecrated to the things of the Spirit.

There was happiness in city and country, for the evils of the competitive system had been abolished, and every man did not seek his own, but the social salvation. All were working for the common good.

The men and the women being pure, their unions were inspired by pure motives only, and as it was then really God that joined them, no man had any cause to put them asunder, and divorce was unknown in the State Ideal.

Love reigned supreme among men, for they all bowed before the divine Law of Service, which made the strong help the weak and the intelligent put his wisdom at the service of his less favored brother.

Thus in that state I saw realized among men the words which are to-day only a prophecy, almost a mockery: liberty, equality, fraternity; and the word which bound them all three into one was Love.

THE END

